CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

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95p

VALENTINE SMASH

MIKIE

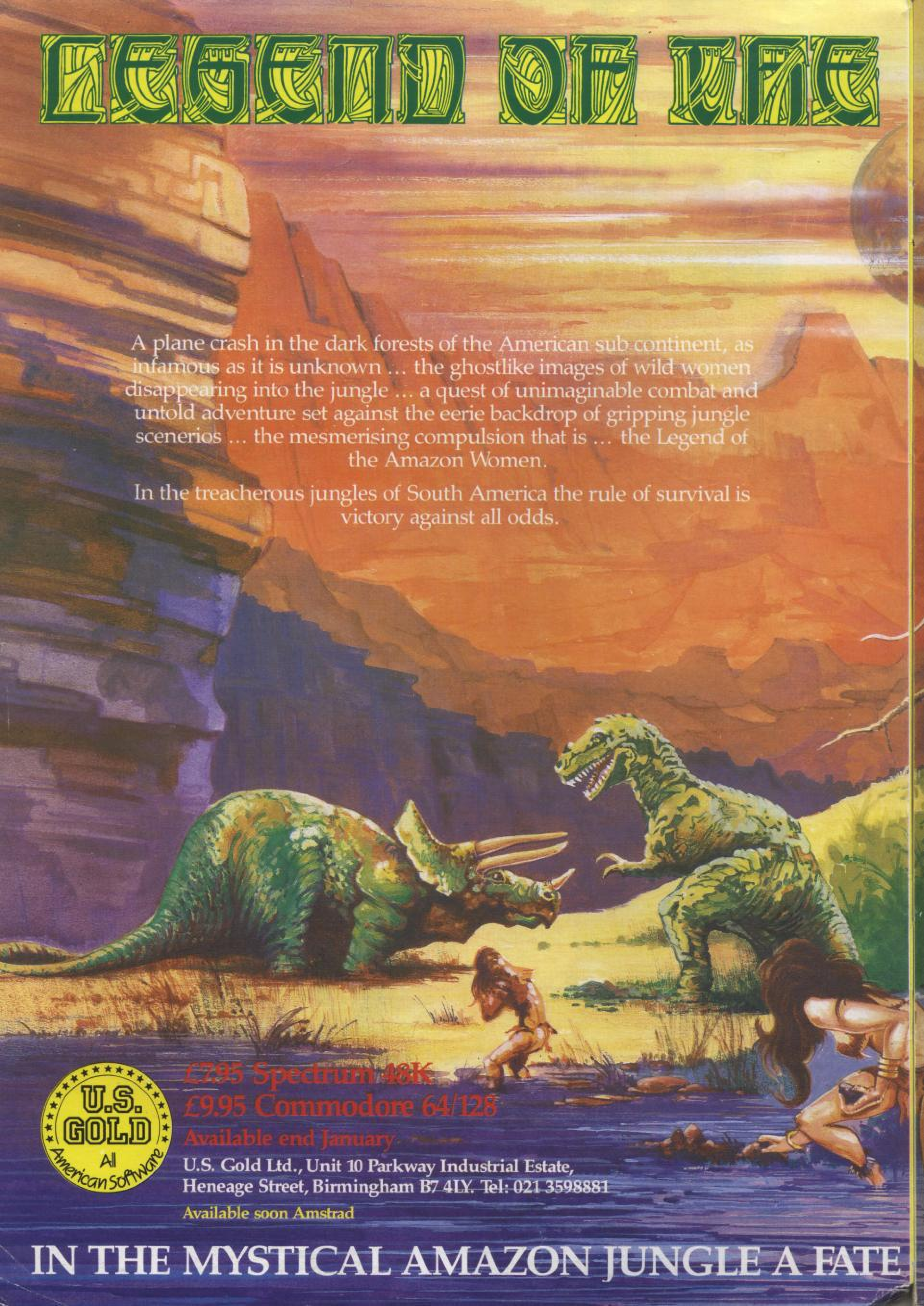


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CRASH
ZX SPECTRUM

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DIY

FEATURES

REGULARS

Remember Remember the 27th February — no, we'll save that one for November. Meanwhile, the March issue's out 27th February

CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

. . . AND A HAPPY 1986



The rush of Spectrum games in the few weeks up to Christmas was quite overwhelming — not just the quantity, but also the quality of software released in the run-up to the festive season was quite staggering.

Things can only be getting better on the Spectrum games scene — and maybe the arguments about the high price of software will begin to ebb slightly as people come to see that the more expensive games, generally, offer a lot more in terms of entertainment value-for-money.

Soon, we should have the results of the 1985 CRASH READERS AWARDS, which will tell us what YOU thought of the twelve months of hard gameplaying that was 1985. Meanwhile, by the time you read this, 1986 will be well underway and if the early signs apparent at the moment are anything to go by, it should be an even better year for games software.

It's clear that the "collapse" of the home computer industry predicted with glee by many people a while ago has not come about. Rather, a thinning-out process has taken place and it is only the stronger companies producing the better products that are still with us. A few of the casualties will be sadly mourned but many of them will hardly be missed.

Out of the ashes of bankruptcy have risen strong companies — some of them perhaps a little TOO strong in some respects, but the overall result has been a general improvement in the quality of computer games.

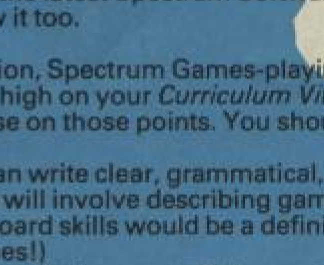
Naturally, a few mediocre products still slip through the net of commercial viability and find their way onto the shelves of software retailers. But increasingly, the choice faced by the consumer is not going to be "which of these programs is worth buying" rather it will become more a case of choosing between a number of games, all of which are good value and worth buying.

Rest assured that we in CRASH Towers will continue to do our best to keep you informed of what's happening on the Spectrum scene. This year, perhaps more than ever, a good read of the magazine before you nip down to the shops will make sure you spend your loot to best advantage.

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

THE MONTHLY SOFTWARE STAR FOR YOUR US GOLD CALENDAR

Have you seen our super **US Gold Calendar Offer** in the last issue of CRASH? We joined forces with US Gold to help you plan your way through a brighter year of software. Last month we gave you a six month calendar in which each month contained a **Red** and a **Blue** star. Between now and June, we'll be printing one **Blue** star in each issue of CRASH (there'll be two in the June issue to complete the first six months). Cut out the stars and affix them in the appropriate places on the calendar. US Gold are printing **Red** stars, on Some of their games packages, and if you collect a US Gold title a month, you can cut out the **Red** stars and stick them on the calendar as well. When the six months are completed, just follow the instructions on the calendar and send it into US Gold at **Unit 10, The Parkway Industrial Centre, Heneage Street, Birmingham B7 4LY** to receive a free game. Then there'll be another six months calendar with stars to collect! Watch out for an exciting Software 86 with your US GOLD/CRASH Calendar!



KERRASH! N·E·W·S I·

Ace reporter and bibulous (LMLWD) playwright
launches for us. We made him write his
here's a trio of new Minson Outings. Coming next



A panoramic view of the inside of London's Horticultural Hall, as it was during the one-day Christmas Microfair a couple of weeks before Christmas. Just look at all those Christmas present hungry bargainhunters. Remember Christmas still?

OH WHAT A LUVVERLY MICROFAIR!

Off we went again, leaving Ludlow, bleary eyed, at five past something horribly early, before the sparrows had even started coughing. Down to the Horticultural Hall, where we found a host of similarly still-bleary-eyed stallholders shuffling goodies out of car boot and van and into the Hall. Meanwhile the super keen earlybird Microfair-holic began queueing in front of the turnstiles.

As usual, a good time was had by all — even if the innocent members of the public had to put up with our very own illustrious and far from shapely editor parading around in a Monty on the Run Jog suit. (Last time **he** did any jogging someone was chasing him!) Playing Tweedledum to the Editor's Tweedledee was similarly shaped Solutions PR man and Ex HCW Editor, Dave Carlos. Between them they were more frightening than Friday 13th — which happened the day before.

Auntie Aggie from Mail Order came along for the ride and was given a *Sex Maniac's Diary* by a shady character from a certain software house (!!) But otherwise there were no dramas. (Life's going to be unbearable in the Mail Order Dept all year, I can tell.)

A fun day for all, and plenty of interesting goodies on offer, as usual. Maybe see you at the next one?

MIKRO-GEN NATIONAL COMPUTER GAMES CHAMPION

Not quite a night of a thousand stars, but certainly a lunchtime of half a dozen Bloody Marys, as tension mounted while four finalists battled it out for the title **National Computer Game Champion 1985** in the plush surroundings of London's Savoy Hotel.

The contest started back in August when local papers were used to select 15 regional winners. From these came a final four who proved their mettle using a second tape with special codes to verify high scores. So it was that 11 year old Steven Kitely from Cardiff; Lee Schofield, just two years older, from Sheffield; Robert Head, 15, from Ipswich and a veritable wrinklie from Runcorn, Bryan Hulme, 24, from Runcorn all found themselves thrown into the arena for the playoff.

Having braced myself for the suspense of the contest with a drink, I sought out Mike Meek, whose company, Mikro-Gen was sponsoring what Mike sees as the FA cup of computer gaming. While the



Smiling Computer Game Champion of 1985, Bryan Hulme clutches his trophy, a cheque for £250 and Suzzanne Mizzi. They say nice things come in threes . . .

software stars fought a 15 minute *Battle of the Planets*, Mikro-Gen's new game chosen for the final, he told me that next year he hopes that each of the computer magazines will enter its own champion — which sounds like one way of settling friendly (?) rivalries.

A couple more cocktails and it was all over, a triumph for age as Bryan Hulme took the prize. And he looked well pleased as he accepted the award, though I was unable to ascertain whether that was because of the cheque for £250 and the trophy or the kiss from page 3 girl, Suzzanne Mizzi, who presented it.

N·P·U·T · · · · · · ·



JOHN MINSON trod the trail of December reports before he disappeared in a Festive Haze, so month: St Brides!

SIR FRED (MIKRO-GEN) LAUNCH



Henry VIII (on the right, in fancy dress) shares a merry quip with Mike Meek (on the left, also in fancy dress). Or was it the other way round? Either way, rumours of Wilma becoming Henry's 7th wife are unfounded.

I think if I could choose the age I lived in, Tudor England would rank high — providing I wasn't a peasant! I can see myself quaffing a flagon of ale and tossing a ham bone over my shoulder before going out wenching with the King. As for the fashions of the time . . . well, they make even my loudest shirts look tame!

Nice, then, of Mikro-Gen to launch *Sir Fred*, their game of daring do in days of old, at London's Tudor Rooms, a theme restaurant that recreates the bawdy era. This gave the assembled hacks a chance to sample mead, favourite tipple of Sir Lunchytyme O'Booze, court reporter to Henry VIII. Meanwhile a historical cabaret, complete with dancing bear and beheading (without which no Tudor dinner was complete) was performed.

Sir Fred being a Spanish knight there were no programmers present, but monarch of Mikro-Gen, Mike Meek, was beginning to wonder whether their ancient gallant would prove more popular than Wally Week. It's a different sort of game and I reckon it will go down well.

Not that I'd forgotten the twentieth century or the Wally tribe. Also on display was *Three Weeks in Paradise*, which could turn out to be the last Wally game, though it could be appearing in a 128 version. Originally destined for the Mikro-Plus it strands the gormless family on a cannibal island. Thank heavens they didn't choose this as the launch theme then. I'm sure breast of chicken is far more succulent then breast of Wilma!

THINK! (Ariolasoft) LAUNCH

Okay, so I messed up. I thought Graeme asked me to cover the launch of a game called Drink**— obviously my sort of game. Only it turns out that he really said "Think!" and here I am, waiting to play a patently brainy game, against its creator, of all people.**

Not that drink was totally wrong, because the lovely Amanda Barry of Ariolasoft (a woman whose last publicity stunt saw her as a squaw tied to a tree by two cowboys, all for the benefit of those privileged Commodore users) is offering a bottle of Scotch to any journo who can beat Chris Palmer.

I'm shown into the arena, and Mr Palmer's calmness tells me he's not given away too many drams that day. He explains the rules and he's the sort of genius who can create a game of classic simplicity. Then he offers me the best of three which just may help the odds, so I accept.

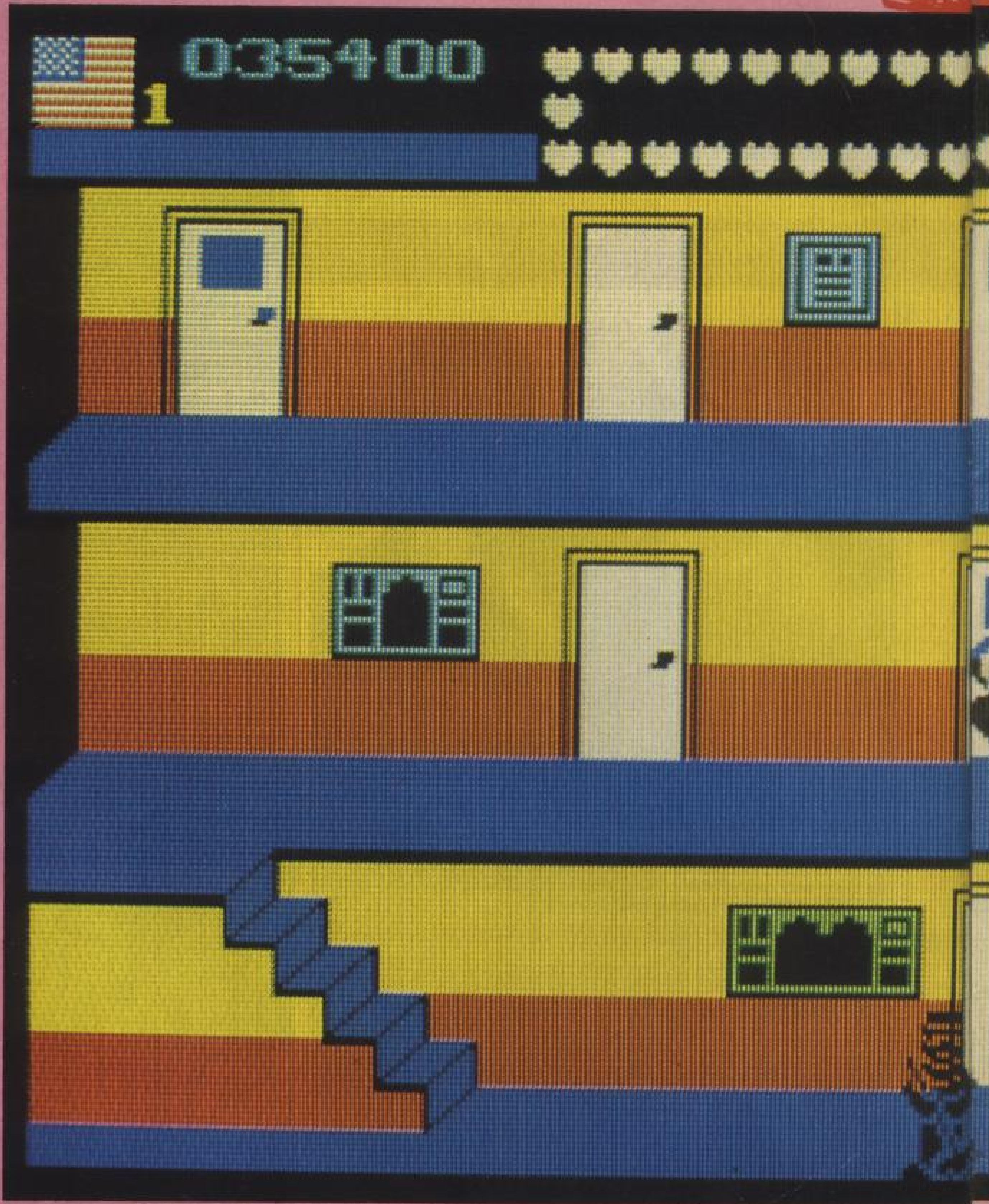
If you can't win clean go down fighting dirty. As Chris ponders my first move I fire my first question at him — a little interviewing to blast him off balance.

I maintain a barrage of questions as he plays, and it transpires that the idea for the game is vaguely similar to four in a row, but that he really wanted to create a board game which couldn't be played on a board. Think! **consists of shifting rows and columns of counters, plus the spaces in between which even I can see could cause problems.**

There's a multitude of options, and the computer isn't infallible — though at its highest level it might as well be, the time it takes to consider every move. Chris advises caution in following strategies; it's a game where the situation can change in a single move. This he demonstrates by winning his second game. Curse it — he can talk and think simultaneously.

So, no whisky for me, but I've got something more valuable — a copy of the game and I reckon that Think! **— ing is so addictive it just might keep me at my Spectrum rather than in the pub drinking.**

M•I•K•I•E



MIKIE

Producer: Imagine
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Jonathan Smith**

Mikie, is the third in Imagines's series of Konami arcade conversions. The game is set in a school and follows the antics of young *Mikie*, a teeny tearaway. This young devil has no respect for his teachers, and when he wants to do something he makes sure that he does it, no matter what stands in his way. Mikie has suddenly decided to take a message to his girlfriend, and rather than wait until dinner time he jumps up from his desk and makes a bee-line for the schoolyard, where he can find her.

The route to his beloved isn't an easy one and Mikie has to go through five different rooms: the classroom; locker room; canteen, and gymnasium before he reaches the schoolyard. Mikie has to collect all the hearts scattered around each consecutive screen before he can move on to the next one. Each time he collects a heart, a letter is added to a message at the top of the screen. Bonus points are awarded for picking up a heart while it is flashing. Understandably, the staff of the school aren't too keen on young tearaways running around the premises at will, and chase after him.

The game starts in the middle of a lesson. Mikie jumps up from his desk and has to collect all the hearts from under the seats of his classmates. They're sitting on the hearts, and he has to bump people onto another seat with a swift nudge from his hips. When a desk is vacant the heart underneath can be collected by walking over it. His chums don't seem to mind his antics, and move away without argument. One guy who does mind, however, is the teacher — he rushes after Mikie and tries to capture him. Mikie loses one of his lives if the teacher grabs him. Occasionally the teacher gets so frustrated that he hurls his false teeth at the delinquent — if they bite home, another life is lost.

If Mikie manages to collect all the hearts on a screen, the door unlocks and he can run out — or burst through the door, at least. All the rooms in the game lead into a hallway which is inhabited by a patrolling janitor, who is joined by teachers who come to his assistance in the chase. There are three landings in the hallway screen and lots of doors. The one leading to the next room is marked 'in'. Mikie has to evade the patrolling adults and make his way to the right door — if he goes into the wrong room, he'll meet with trouble . . . .

After the classroom, comes the locker room, where Mikie is chased by a teacher, another janitor and the school cook as he tries to collect the hearts from lockers. The hearts are three to a locker, and to collect them Mikie has to face a locker and shout, once for each heart. If the chase proves to be a little too much, Mikie can collect a basketball and throw it at one of his pursuers — if it hits him, then he'll bounce the ball for a while rather than follow Mikie.

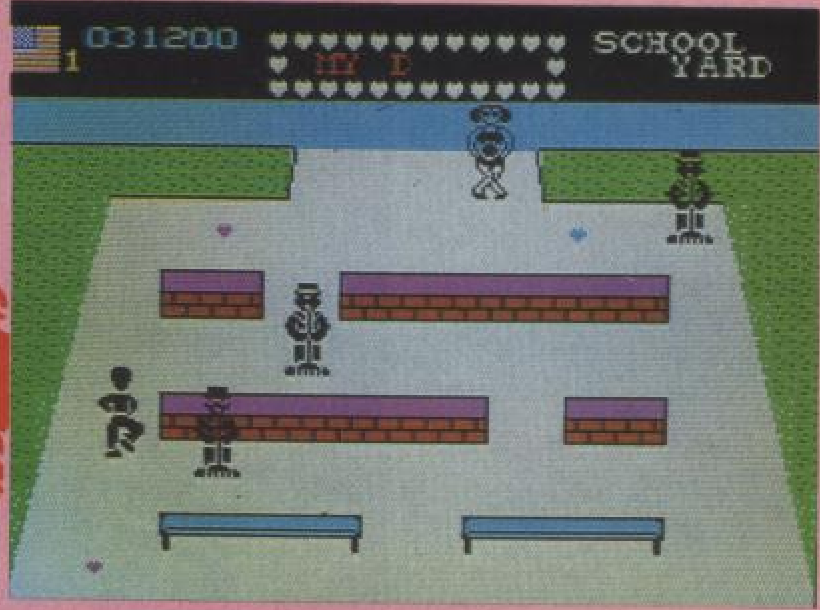
After the locker room has been emptied of hearts, it's back into the hallway and off to the canteen where hearts are littered over the floor. Mikie has to run over them to gather them up and there's a group of three hearts on the table which have to be shouted at. Three cooks give Mikie hassle this time, although he can pick up chickens and throw them to the chefs, who abandon the chase while they eat.

Through the hallway again, Mikie reaches the penultimate screen, the gymnasium where the school's cheerleaders are practising. Hearts are scattered over the floor and Mikie has to pick them up whilst making sure that he doesn't bump into one of the dancing girls. Contact with a girl stuns Mikie for a while which allows the gym master to capture him.

If Mikie survives the cheerleaders and gym teacher, he can go on to the final screen, the schoolyard. Three caretakers make the going tough as Mikie scuttles round picking up the hearts from the playground floor. If he gets them all, he can go to the top of the screen and give his girlfriend a kiss and hand her his message.

After that it's back to screen one, only this time there are more hearts to collect and the grown-ups are far more determined.





CRITICISM

● 'Terrific! Right from the very start. Mikie is a professional, colourful, graphically brilliant, tuneful bonanza. A great loading screen is followed by an excellent rendition of the Beatle's 'A Hard Days Night'. Mikie doesn't just look and sound good — it's addictive and playable too. What more could a games player ask for? If Imagine continue to keep up this high standard of releases they'll do very well. Buy this game — you'd have to be a pretty dull person not to like it.'

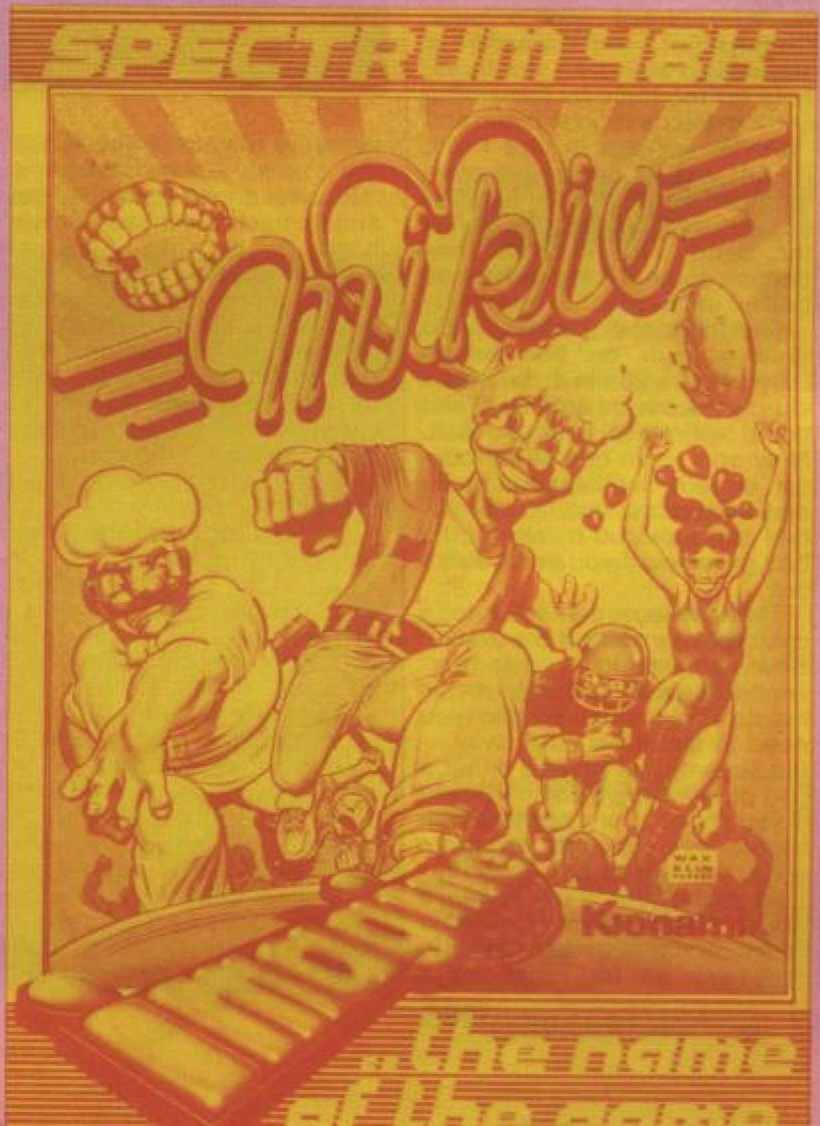
● *'The sound on the title screen is just mega-fantastic, surely the best heard on a Spectrum with its brilliant drum effects and synthy sound. I was a bit disappointed, though — I went round all the screens on my second go! Still, there are some very nice touches, especially the behind the 'wrong' doors in the hallway, where I found loads of things — boxing gloves, big feet and even naked women (!?!). The way you can throw chickens and balls to your pursuers to keep them off your back for a while is very original, and can be used to great effect in sticky situations. If you're spending money on games after Christmas check out Imagine's latest releases . . . .'*

● 'Yet another superb arcade conversion from Imagine, *Mikie* faithfully copies the arcade kiss 'em up and the result is a highly enjoyable and playable game. The big characters and bright, jolly backgrounds create an excellent atmosphere and make what is basically a very simple game something special. The sound is amazing, there's no other word for it — I could hardly believe the excellent rendition of 'A Hard Day's Night', combined with the excellent jingles during the game, it makes this the best sounding Spectrum game yet. If you like arcade games then you should have a look at this one. With its humorous gameplay and excellent touches *Mikie* really rises up from the mire of banal releases.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: redefinable
Joystick: Kempston, Cursor, Interface 2
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: excellent
Graphics: big, bright and bold
Sound: amazing
Skill levels: increases with play
Screens: six
General rating: Yet another first-rate Konami conversion

Use of computer	94%
Graphics	93%
Playability	94%
Getting started	91%
Addictive qualities	93%
Value for money	93%
Overall	**93%**



WEST BANK

Producer: Gremlin Graphics
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Alvaro Mateos**

Gremlin Graphics have acquired the English rights for yet another game written by the Spanish software house Dinamic. (Remember *Rocco*?) In *West Bank* you take on the defence of a Wild West branch of a bank. Your task is to prevent a whole range of baddies from robbing the bank while letting the nice guys in town leave their money safely with your employers.

The bank has twelve doors in all, though only three doors at a time are displayed on screen — this three-door 'window' can be scrolled left or right during quiet moments, when all three doors are closed. The aim of the game is to allow the good guys (and gal) to deposit loot in the bank: each of the nine phases of the working day lasts until some money has been deposited by a customer through each door. The doors swing open at random intervals to reveal either an honest customer clutching a bag of money or a baddie, intent on pumping you full of lead.

Understandably, the bank manager is not too keen on having his customers blown away — shooting an innocent depositor results in the loss of two lives, one of which is yours. On the other hand, if a baddie is allowed to stand on the threshold for too long, he loses off a shot, the screen goes black and "BANG" appears in blood red. He got you. To complicate matters further, not all the baddies are out and out wicked. Julius the dandy, for instance may deposit some money or he may pull a gun on you.

Shooting the baddies who draw a gun on you before they've got a gun in their hand is simply not cricket old boy — and once again two lives are lost. Now and again one of the honest citizens will appear at an open doorway, only to be robbed and replaced by one of the bad guys and if you don't watch out . . .

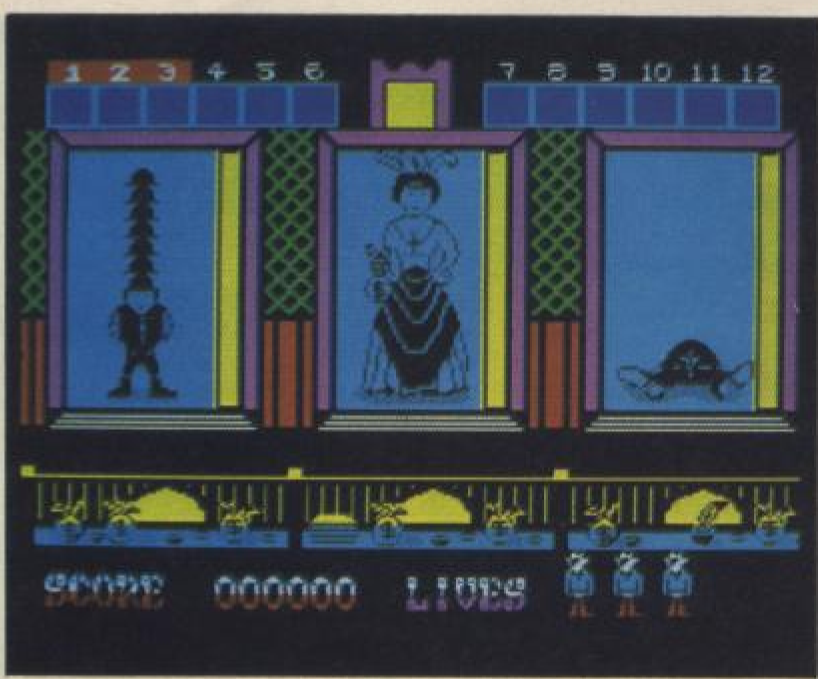
There's also a comedian for a customer — Bowie the dwarf. Bowie appears in an open doorway with seven hats piled on his head. To join in his joke you need to shoot his hats away — the seventh hat reveals either a bag of money, which he'll pay in if you shoot it, or a bomb which blows everyone to kingdom come if a bullet bounces off it.

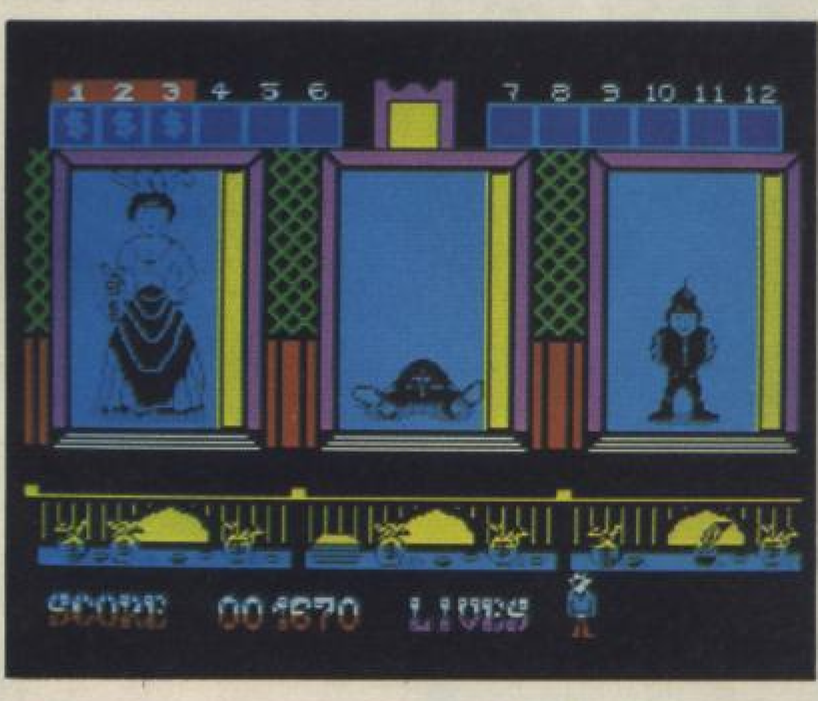
At the bottom of the screen, a dollar meter clocks up how much money has been paid into the bank so far — giving a measure of your ability as security guard. Bonus dollars are added for shooting the bad guys and for each hat shot off Bowie's head. To the right of the cash register is the display which shows how many lives you have remaining. The goodies and baddies are reincarnated each time they're shot — indeed they must all be triplets, for the same character can appear simultaneously in all three doorways.

At the start of each phase of the day, there are twelve empty boxes at the top of the screen, numbered according to the doors of the bank. A red cursor straddles three of the boxes to let you know which three portals you are currently defending. A little rolling window above the middle door registers the arrival of money as a door closes behind a depositor, and the box corresponding to the door through which the cash was paid displays a dollar sign when some cash has arrived.

When all twelve doors have been used to pay in cash and the row of boxes is full of dollar signs, it's time to earn a little freelance bounty money in a shootout with three bad guys on the bonus screen. The display changes and it's a good old fashioned three on one shoot out. A counter decrements to zero and the three guys draw guns — the quicker you shoot them the more bounty you win, but remember: shooting a chap who hasn't got a gun in his hand loses you a life. As the baddies turn up their toes to reveal the soles of their shoes, your score appears in the air above their corpses — if you're really quick on the draw "EXTRA" appears above a vanquished lawbreaker to indicate that you have won an extra life.

At the beginning of the game it's possible to choose what time to clock on for work — you can begin at phase 1, 3 or 6 of the nine phase day and, true to life, the further into a day's work you get, the harder it is. Phases 8 and 9 are overtime — it's dark outside and the doors open to reveal shadowy figures against a blue background. Dangerous times indeed. No wonder they invented the Autobank.





CRITICISM

● **'Espanola por favor! this is a great little game! Despite the instructions on my copy being in the language of senoritas and bullfighters, I managed to get into it quite quickly. The graphics are big (I mean BIG), very western like and pleasing. The action required on level 6 is fast and furious — thank heaven for fast key responses. All you budding Billy the Kids had better mosie on down to the gen'ral store and pick up a copy of this one!'**

● *'I liked* West Bank. *It's simple and straightforward but nicely presented and addictive to play. The characters are nicely drawn and there's enough variety and surprise elements in the game to keep you on your toes for a long while — no matter how much you practice there's always going to be room for improvement. Lots of fun, and ideal for sharpening reactions.'*

● 'This is a funny sort of game which involves some very repetitive action but is highly addictive and enjoyable nevertheless. *West Bank* requires some pretty neat finger work and gets incredibly fast and furious on later levels. The characters are massive and excellently animated and the scrolling, although blocky, is fast. The whole game has a great atmosphere as you wait to see what is revealed when the door opens — will it be someone who draws a gun or just a harmless li'l lady . . . It's a change to play something nice and mindless rather than having to wade through reams of instructions before being able to get started.'

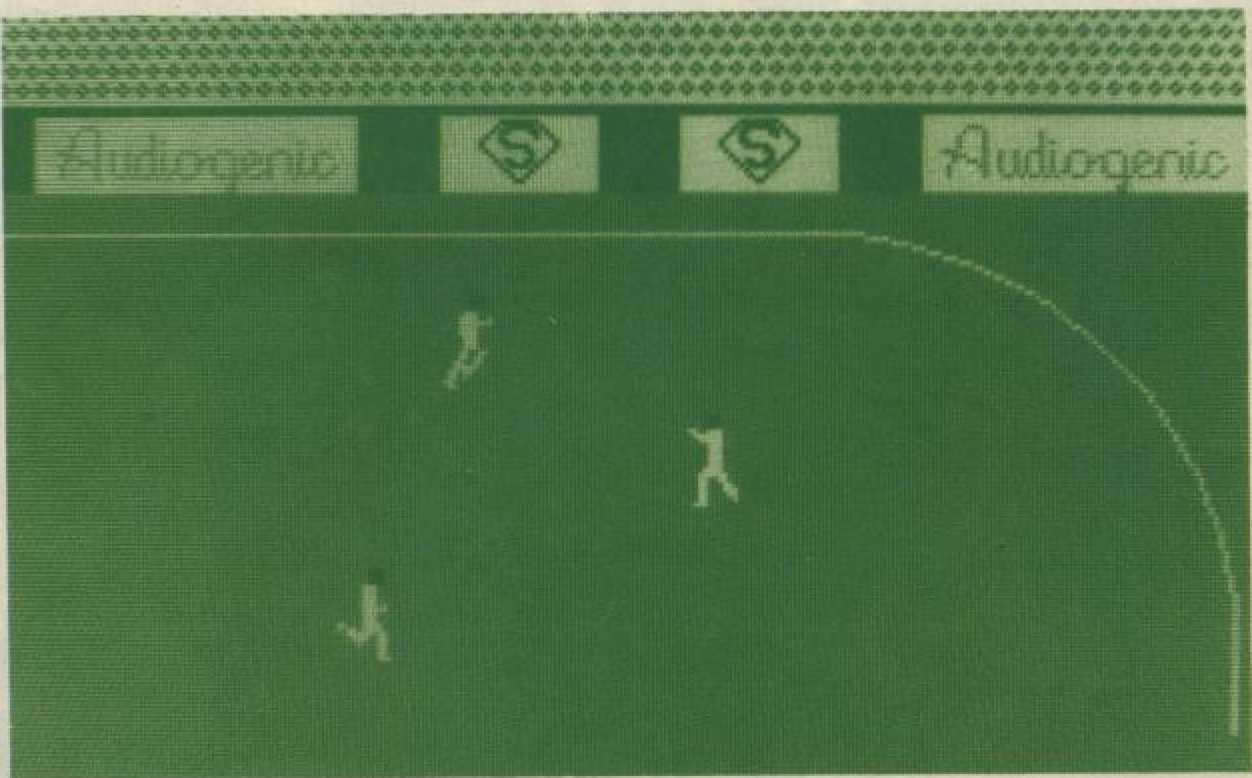
COMMENTS

Control keys: O-P, Left-Right, 1, 2, 3 fire through left, middle and right door, N to choose level
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: well placed keys, responsive
Use of colour: bright and cheerful, no clashes
Graphics: large and clearly animated, very jolly
Sound: spot effects only, no tune
Skill levels: 9 phases to the day, getting progressively harder
Screens: scrolling bank screen and shoot out scenes
General rating: an entertainingly simple program that will have you coming back for more

Use of computer	74%
Graphics	87%
Playability	89%
Getting started	83%
Addictive qualities	89%
Value for money	82%
Overall	**84%**

GRAHAM GOOCH'S TEST CRICKET

Producer: Audiogenic
Retail price: **£9.95**
Language: **machine code**



Cricket simulations are quite a difficult thing to do, since the game itself is a slow and leisurely one (despite recent developments in one day cricket and and equipping players with futuristic protective clothing to induce a feeling a fast danger into the game), but Audiogenic have added a little action to spice it up.

GG's TC has two playing modes — simulation and arcade. With simulation one or two players can play but in arcade mode only one player may take part. First you have to decide how long the match will actually be: 40, 55 or 60 overs. If you're in arcade mode then there's a choice of nine levels of play, the computer to battle against and a squad of twenty men from which to choose your team. You have to be careful to choose all the correct members of the team, taking into account each potential member's skills in batting, bowling and fielding.

If simulation is chosen you don't actually take part as such but make tactical decisions when selecting. Once started it becomes a sit-back-and-watch strategy game with some interaction after every innings. If you are bowling then you can choose between the bowler attacking on the offside or the legside. If batting then you can choose between defensive, normal or aggressive play.

Arcade mode is entirely different, you actually take part in a test and bat and bowl in real time. When bowling you have to move the joystick from side to side *Decathlon* style to make your bowler deliver a fast and hard ball. If you want a slow delivery then just slow up the toggling for a bit.

When batting you have to manoeuvre the batsman to a good position and strike the ball by a timely press on the fire button. If you get the stroke right then the ball is knocked for some runs. Get it spot on and you get a four or even a boundary six.

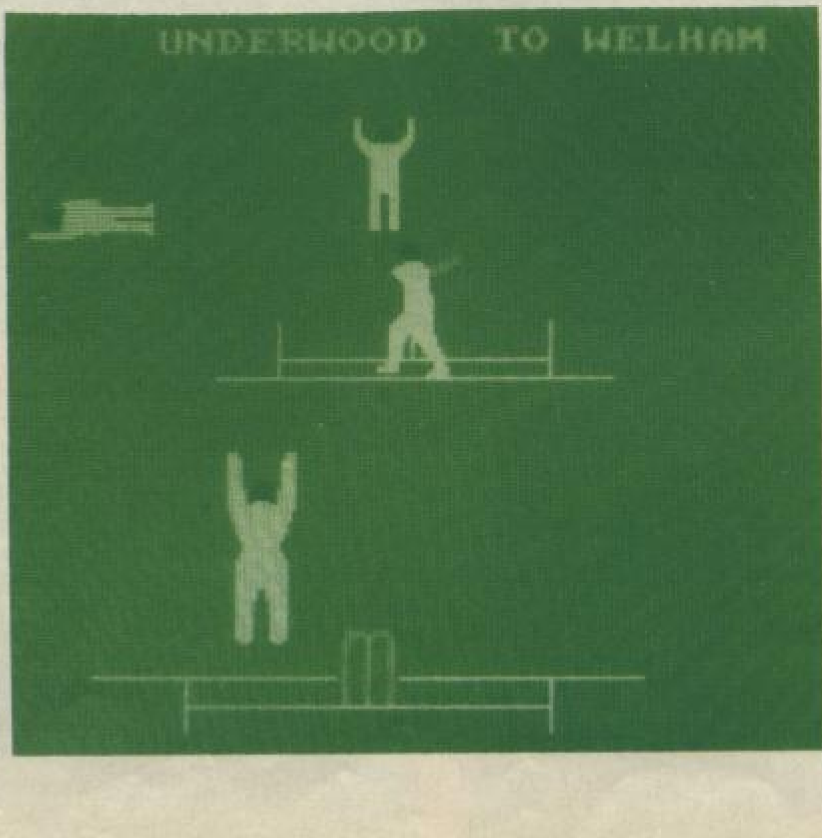
Throughout the game the score is shown after each over or when a batsman is out. There is also another feature which allows cricket teams to be loaded in so you can play all your favourites — old or REALLY old!

COMMENTS

● *'GG's Cricket* **does actually have some animated graphical content. Okay, you may consider why this is so exciting — well let's be honest chaps, until this game Cricket and graphics were just not on. (It was just not Cricket)! Fair enough, Ultimate won't be too worried by these graphics. The game allows for arcade or simulation play. Arcade — well it's not really hyper zappily good, but offers much more than its competitors. As for the simulation game, it's pretty much like the arcade version but with less to do! In trying to liven the game up they've lost most of the strategic elements but have gained in arcade qualities.'**

● 'Graham Gooch's Test Cricket *is the best attempt at a cricket simulation to appear on the Spectrum so far. Despite my own dislike for the sport, I can easily see how anyone interested would instantly get hooked. For those of you uninterested in the arcade side of life there's a simulation mode allowing the player to make fine tactical changes between innings and men. In arcade mode things get a bit more exciting and may even appeal to some non-cricketing fans. The animation of the figures is quite good and they move realistically despite their blocky appearance, adding greatly to the overall flavour. This is a great simulation which should go down well with fans of the sport and deserves some attention outside of cricketing circles.'*

● 'Cricket seems to have been one of those sports that a number of companies have tried to simulate on the Spectrum from the earliest days, mostly with rather sad results. The nature of the sport is a bit slow to provide fast thrills on a computer, but Audiogenic seem to have managed a satisfactory blend of the essential strategy elements with some of the arcade action that has been so lacking in previous cricketing simulations. For the first time we have (almost) real looking playing characters doing very crickety things, and the screen cutting from main pitch to outfield action works very well. So *Graham Gooch's Test Cricket* may not be everyone's cup of tea, but it's a must for cricket fans, a worthy buy for sports simulation collectors and probably well worth a look at for everyone else.'



CRITICISM

Control keys: Player One: 6/7 left/right, 8/9 down/up, 0 fire Player Two: 1/2 left/right, 3/4 down/up 5 fire
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Keyboard play: adequate
Use of colour: good. Not much attribute clash
Graphics: rather blobby
Sound: good crowd cheer, not much else
Skill levels: one, two types of game
Screens: main screen, plus menus and automatic fielding screen
General rating: Best cricket simulation yet on the Spectrum.

Use of computer	**72%**
Graphics	**60%**
Playability	**73%**
Getting started	**69%**
Addictive qualities	**68%**
Value for money	**64%**
Overall	**65%**

SQUIRT

Producer: David F Todd
Retail price: **£2.50**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **David F Todd**

Squirt is the tale of a pocket sized plumber called in to mend a leaking sink. Trouble is, that when you're knee high to a pixel, a leaking sink is not the easiest of problems to tackle — especially when various strange, malevolent objects populate that sink. To stop the tap from leaking, a full toolkit has to be collected. A small button situated just underneath the tap causes Squirt's mate to bung down a tool to fill up the kit every time it's given a thud. The nasties flying around the sink make life difficult — they're prone to hit the tool and cause it to disintegrate.

Collecting tools would be impossible if it wasn't for Squirt's Atomic Washing Liquid Bottle. Shooting from the hip, Squirt is able to blast away any of the sink sadists — apart from the deadly red claw that appears if he hangs around too long. The claw homes in on Squirt mercilessly, which is bad news considering its touch is deadly.

The sink automatically fixes itself once Squirt has a full toolkit, but a fixed tap means it's time to move on to yet another job — another sink with a leaky tap populated by even more brutal baddies.

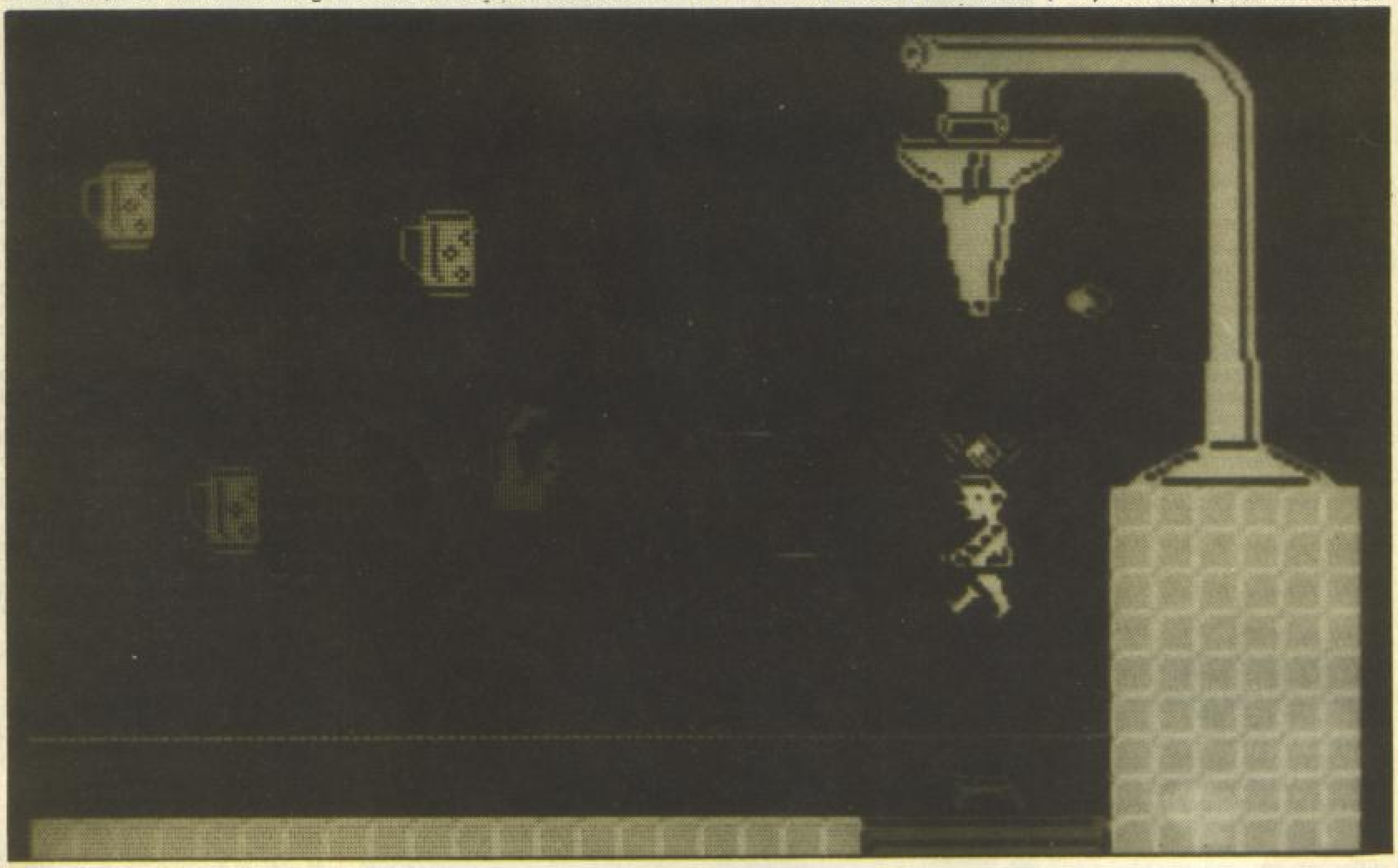
Squirt's sink adventures are shown in a cross sectional view of the basin. Being a fairly unusual plumber, Squirt can fly around the sink but he can't venture into the water or fly out of the top. The baddies have the same restrictions as Squirt. Three baddies populate the sink at any given moment, and if one is vaporised by a splash of radioactive washing liquid, then a clone of the dead baddie, full of equally horrible nastiness, enters from the top of the screen.

As the drips drip from the faulty tap, the water level in the sink rises slowly. If it gets to the rim of the porcelain, Squirt dies from a lack of space — the playing area simply gets too small. Death is also a consequence of hitting any of the basin baddies.

As tools are captured by Squirt, a small replica of a toolbox builds itself slowly on the bottom status screen. Once the toolkit's handle appears it's time to move on to the next sink. Also on the status bar are a number of lozenge shaped objects representing how many resurrections of Squirt remain — you start with five lives. As in most arcade style games points are the prime motive: your score clocks up as denizens disintegrate and tools are taken.

Each sink is different in the naughtiness of its nasties and the form that you opponents take. The first sheet has a team of mutant thermos flasks aggravating you, other contenders for king of the sink include cassettes, monstrous faces and cups.

If Squirt's experiences are anything to go by, no wonder you can't find a plumber when you want one....



CRITICISM

● **'There isn't really enough in this game for it to be very playable or compelling. A one screen playing area in which you are set one task — to collect falling objects — seems to be a pretty out of date format for a game nowadays. This sort of game was around a couple of years ago. My copy of the game tended to crash half way through the first screen, but I don't think I missed much. The graphics are about average, with little flicker and not many attribute problems. The characters move around the screen quite well, but sound is poorly used, with only a few spot effects.'**

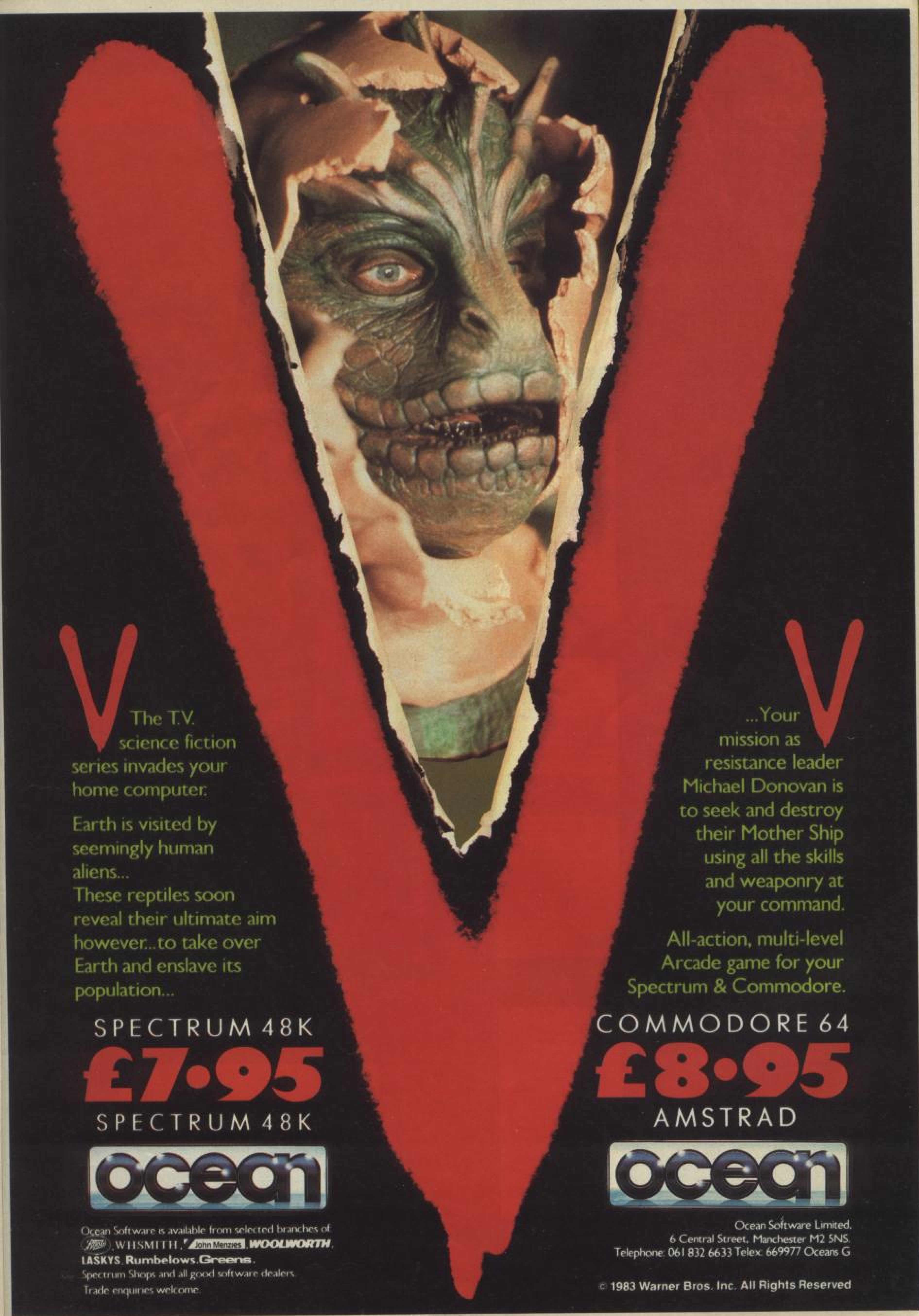
● *'This one got off to a grinding start with what I call a 'lazy' loading screen — just a screen from the game with a few overlaid titles. The game falls down elsewhere on points like the graphics. It's somewhat reminiscent of* Manic Miner, *although not so well animated.* Squirt *gets a bit monotonous after about a quarter of an hour, as the only things that progress are the 'baddies' and the speed. Even at £2.50 this didn't appeal to me. Not one I'd recommend.'*

● 'Not bad, *Squirt* was Okay, although it wasn't really very professional in style. Squirt himself is a simple *Dynamite Dan* character who isn't animated, he simply faces the direction you point him in. The graphics are bearable but lack any real body — once you manage to escape the first screen you're faced with new aliens on the same backdrop. At £2.50 I suppose that you can't really complain, but I won't be adding this to my games collection'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q/W left,right P/L up,down and M for fire.
Joystick: Kempston and Cursor
Keyboard play: fast, responsive and adequate
Use of colour: some attribute clash, but nice use of primary colours
Graphics: big, clear but sparse.
Sound: nice spot effects, but mostly silent
Skill levels: one
Screens: one screen which gets progressively harder
General rating: A simplistic game, but not a bad one at that

Use of computer 48%
Graphics 41%
Playability 42%
Getting started 49%
Addictive qualities 43%
Value for money 55%
Overall 51%



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A CRASH Smash

Z•O•I•D•S

ZOIDS

Producer: Martech
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Electronic Pencil Company**

A warlike race inhabited the planet Zoidstar, building complex fighting machines, Zoids, which eventually allowed them to defeat all their enemies in battle. Once the potential for real war was over, the organic life forms developed androids to control their Zoids and one-on-one battles were fought for the entertainment of the populus. Then a freak meteor storm destroyed all living organisms, leaving only immensely powerful fighting machines controlled by sophisticated androids to inherit the planet.

A standby Zoid battleforce patrolling a far flung galaxy attempted to return to Zoidstar after the meteor storm with the intention of recolonising the planet, but their transport ship crashed on Zoidstar's cold Blue Moon. Only the Zoids survived, and they soon discovered that the freezing temperatures on the moon meant they'd have to redesign themselves . . . and thus the Red Zoids were formed, gaining their colour from heat which they radiate.

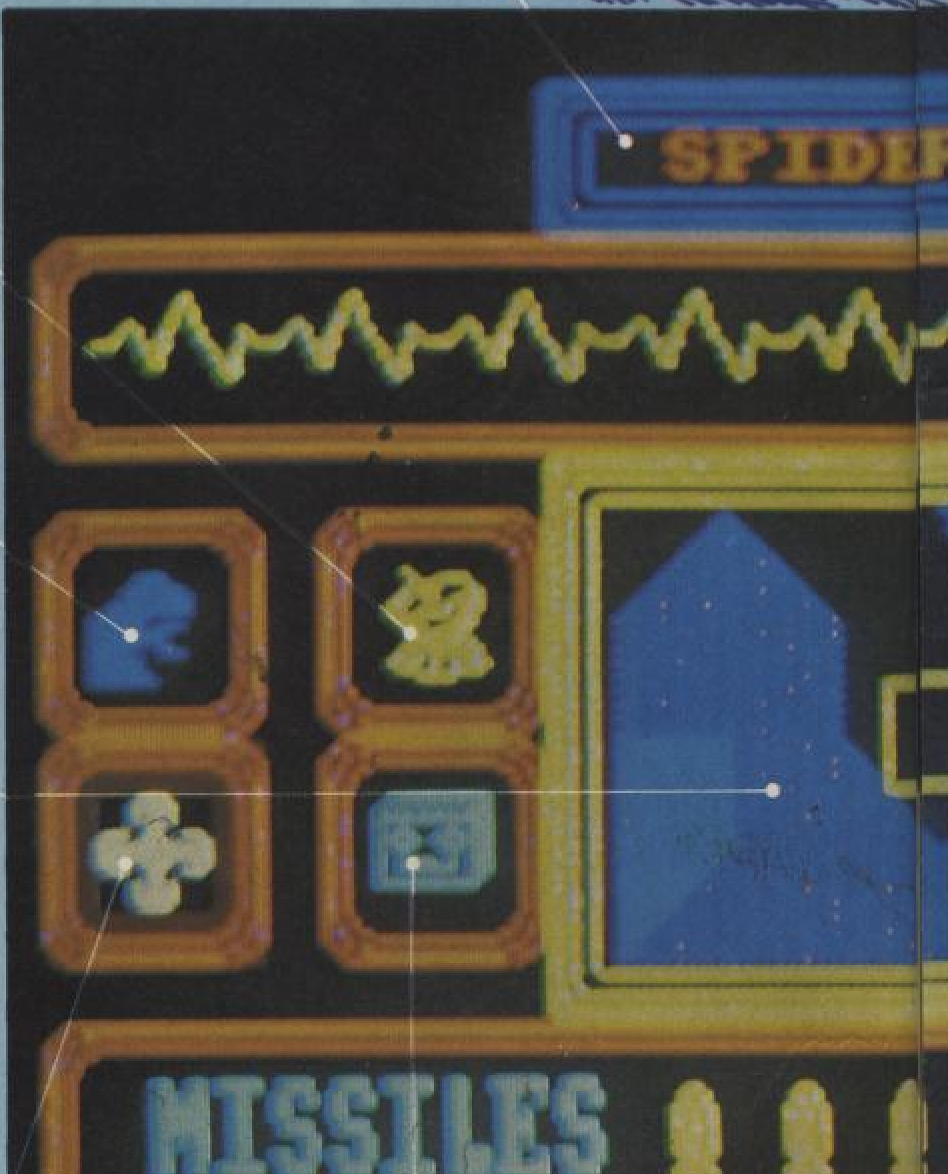
The Red Zoids learnt how to operate as a unified fighting force and decided to return to the Zoidstar and completely destroy the old breed of Blue Zoids. Red Zoid battle squadrons were made ready and the attack followed.

The few Blue Zoids that survived initial onslaught regrouped and set about building a new Blue Zoid they called **Zoidzilla**; the ultimate fighting machine, capable of challenging the might of the leader of the Red Zoids, *Redhorn the Terrible*. The Zoid war raged.

Then a small and insignificant space craft plunged into the struggle, crashlanding on Zoidstar. A Blue Zoid patrol was the first to reach the wreckage and it picked up a humanoid survivor, who was to become known as The Earthman. He soon became skilled in the art of **Zoidthought**,

SCANNER Icon
Scans your immediate vicinity for objects on or just under the ground, namely pieces of Zoidzilla and Zoidar power pods. The power pods play a vital function in the game, providing extra energy and ammunition. Sometimes, when you destroy a city dome a power pod can be found in the wreckage. Look for them!

YOUR CURRENT ZOID



ZOID ID Icon
Identifies Red Zoids. When the icon is selected the map switches to short range and a cursor appears. Move this over whatever you want to identify, press fire and two windows emerge from the icon, one showing a picture of the Zoid under examination and the other gives a few brief words of description.

THE MAP WINDOW
This shows an aerial view of the locality and has two magnifications — long range and short range. The long range map shows all the features of the landscape and is used when planning the route for your Zoid to take — move the cursor to where your want to be your Zoid will travel there, providing it doesn't find hazards on the route.

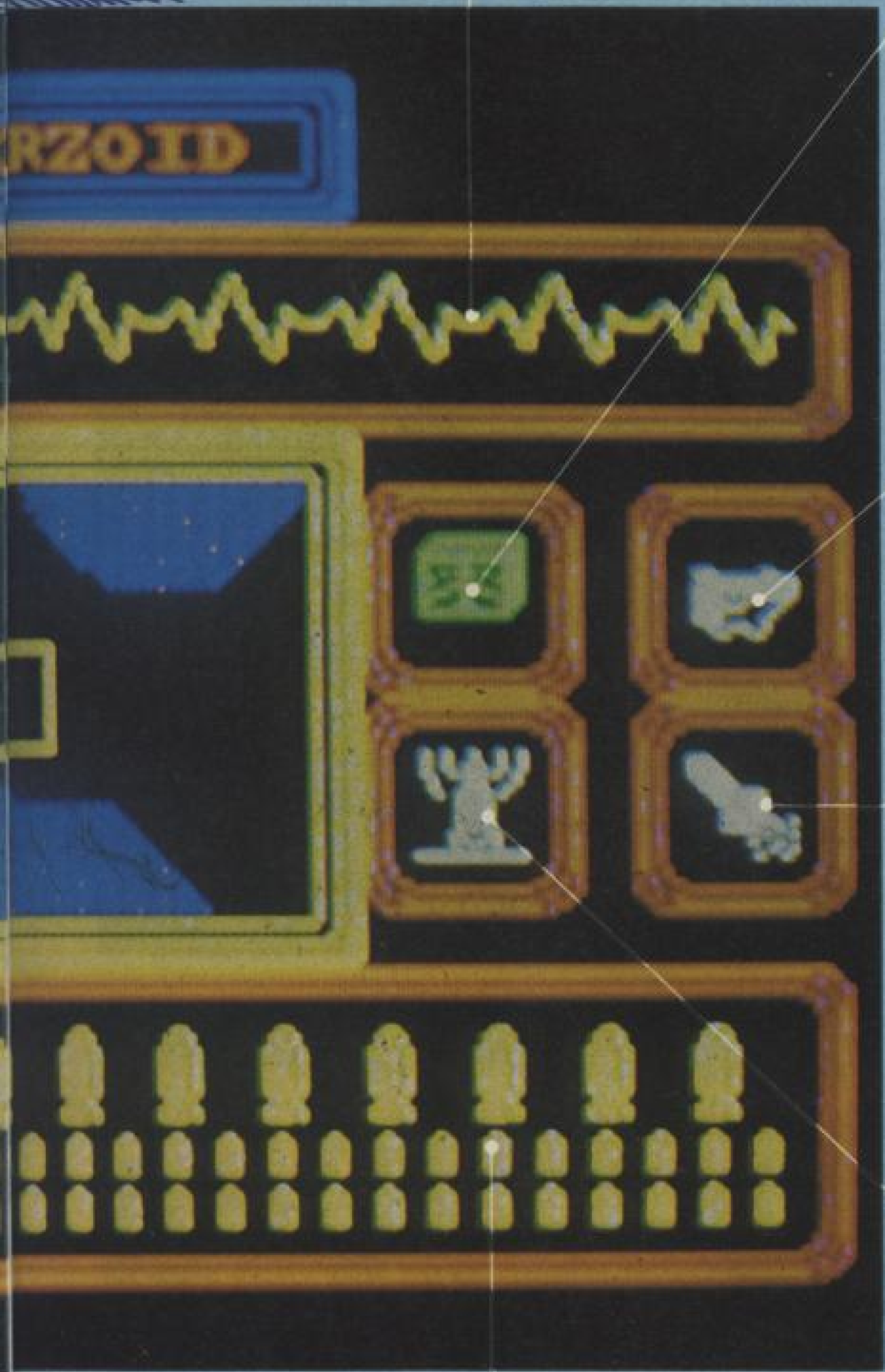
The short range map shows your immediate vicinity, with you placed at the centre. In this mode the map also shows whether there are any Red Zoids in the locality. As your Zoid moves, the map scrolls.

MOVE Icon
Used to move your Zoid around the planet. The map goes into long range mode, and a cursor appears over your Zoid's location. Move the cursor to the place where you want your Zoid to go and press fire. It then follows the course dictated by the cursor automatically (unless it senses danger on the way) allowing you to concentrate on other Zoid functions.

INFORMATION Icon
Works like the Zoid ID icon, except it can be used to call up information on installations — city domes, mines and radio beacons.

ZOIDTHOUGHT
The Zoidthought display shows the state of mind of the Zoid. Apparently with practise this signal can be interpreted.

STATUS Icon
Select information to be displayed in the STATUS DISPLAY area.



GUNS Icon
This is automatically selected by the Zoid if it comes under fire. When the icon is selected a window emerges showing the incoming missiles. A "3D Perspective Enhancer" is overlayed to help you aim the gun and shoot down the missiles before they strike you. Each missile that hits home adds ten percent to your damage.

MISSILES Icon
Launches camera-equipped missiles. The map switches to short range and once your target has been selected with the cursor another window emerges showing the flightpath of the missile as seen through the camera. During flight you have control over a missile's left/right trajectory, and you have to guide the missile past obstacles to its target. A window with a mushroom cloud appears on detonation.

RADIO BASE Icon
This plays an important part in the game since it allows you to radio your home base and dictate instructions. Using this you can request a missile strike on a Red Zoid installation. The missiles usually take around half a minute to reach their target but are very effective and never miss.
The other function of this icon is to contact home base and tell them the location of a piece of Zoidzilla if you find one. When you do, a spaceship is beamed down to pick up the piece and your Zoid is automatically upgraded to a more powerful model. The background colour of your display window changes and a new Zoid name appears at the top. The order is Spiderzoid, Scorpozoid, Trooperzoid, Tank, Great Gorgon — finally Zoidzilla himself.

THE STATUS DISPLAY
This displays the condition of vital functions — ammunition remaining (missiles and bullets), power, damage sustained and tells you how many pieces of Zoidzilla have been collected.

the means by which a pilot communicates with the Zoid which carries him — indeed he proved to be a fearless and cunning adversary, better than an android when in control of a Zoid.

The Earthman drew up a plan which, if successful, would win the war for the Blue Zoids. He volunteered to merge minds with the mighty Zoidzilla and be transported to the middle of the Red Zoid city complex with the aim of destroying their entire base and production factories.

Disaster struck — as the Blue Zoid spacecraft containing Earthman and Zoidzilla descended, a missile struck it destroying the craft and scattering pieces of Zoidzilla over the landscape. The Red Zoids recovered the six pieces of Zoidzilla and buried them under six different city domes. With the Earthman presumed dead and with the loss of their mightiest fighting machine, the Blue Zoids seemed doomed . . .

All was not lost, however. The Red Zoids failed to spot a small Spiderzoid scuttling away from the wreckage . . . it contained the Earthman. You.

You begin the game in that Spiderzoid, your mind merged with the machine's consciousness and in control of its functions (annotated on the main picture). Your mission is to roam the planet, entering the Red Zoid city complexes in order to collect the six pieces of Zoidzilla. Each time you collect a segment of the mighty machine, your Zoid will be upgraded to a more powerful, stronger machine until finally, with all six pieces in your possession, you will be able to merge minds with Zoidzilla. Then you must seek out Redhorn the Terrible and do battle.

There are ten Red Zoid strongholds, each containing a number of cities, a mine, a powerplant and a distress beacon. The domed cities are guarded by Slitherzoids and contain other, more powerful Red Zoids which will be released upon you. Spending too long in one stronghold is dangerous — the distress beacon summons Redhorn and Mammoth the Destroyer, if you remain in one place too long, life will get very short!

Remember, you are not in control of your Zoid — you have merged minds with it, and use the keyboard or joystick to operate the interface between your mind and the mind of the machine. When you use the icons, windows will pop onto the main display, in the same way as thoughts pop into your mind. Heed them. Occasionally your Zoid will not do exactly as it is told — it is programmed to survive if at all possible.

An excellent feature of the game is the fact that a game can be saved out for future playing. The only problem is that the game can't be saved if your Zoid feels threatened . . .

Z•O•I•D•S

CRITICISM

● '*Zoids* **is simply the best game I've played on the Spectrum. There are games with better graphics, better sound and ones which have amazing features, but this one with the sheer depth of game and fabulous on-screen presentation, overshadows them all. The objective of the game seems pretty simple, but actually achieving the task requires a combination of arcade skills and strategy. After playing the game all morning I found myself still discovering aspects of gameplay that I'd overlooked completely. The program offers a huge challenge, but the task it throws down is by no means an impossible one, it just requires a lot of learning and experimentation. Unlike most games the reward for finishing is one which makes the game well worth persevering with. The graphics are excellent, with an amazing windowing system and excellent 3D when you have to guide a missile to its target.** *Zoids* **is a game not to be missed.'**

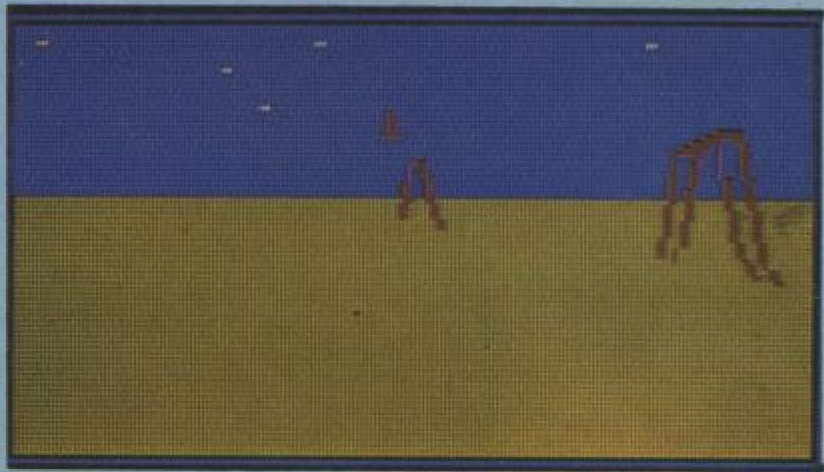
● *'If you can only afford one game this month then this is the one to buy! The Electronic Pencil company have improved vastly on their first game, the* Fourth Protocol, *and have produced one of the most addictive, engrossing and innovative games to appear for quite a while. Following the style of some of Denton Designs' games they have included icons, windows and arcade action to produce a game that has much to offer the player. The depth of play is astounding. Graphically the game is very good, but the sheer scope of Zoids makes it a winner. As well as being a massive game it is also very easy to get into: the icons are very straight forward and in no time at all you are running around doing battle with Red Zoids. This game could take a couple of months to play out, and if you want a lot of entertainment for your money, get it!'*

● 'The most prominent aspect of *Zoids* is the strategy element. There are snippets of arcade action too, and when they do come up they're very good. The icons are simple and easy to use and the graphics are very good. Sound is the only thing that the game lacks, as is the case so often with Spectrum games, but it's not really that important, is it? I'd recommend *Zoids* to anyone who likes a good challenge, because it's not a '10 minutes play and its finished' job unlike so many of the games these days.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: excellent, with a very fast and effective windowing system
Sound: reasonable
Skill levels: gets harder as you start to cause trouble to the enemy
Screens: main display console, with windows and a scrolling map
General rating: A brilliant arcade action/strategy game

Use of computer	94%
Graphics	95%
Playability	93%
Getting started	89%
Addictive qualities	95%
Value for money	96%
Overall	**96%**



Guiding your missile home. Left/right to dodge the bits of scenery that get in the way!



Taking a closer look at one of the features of the city network via the INFORMATION icon opens little windows



The arcade sequence in which you have to shoot down incoming missiles — accessed automatically by your Zoid when it's under attack



Long range targetting map, used when calling up a radio strike

BARRY McGUIGAN WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING

Producer: Activision
Retail price: **£7.99**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Gamestar**

The title of this game could well lead you to believe that you don the boxing gloves of Barry McGuigan himself and take to the ring. You don't. The idea behind the game is to work your way through the ranks of professional and semi-professional boxers so you can take on the mighty Irishman himself and try to beat him.

When you start the game you are asked to assemble your boxer. This interesting option allows you to add personality and individual style to your combatant. You can select his race, the colour of his shorts and hair, his personality (ranging from 'loudmouth' to 'nice guy') and then the actual type of fighter he is. You have several options: dancer, boxer, mixed, slugger and bulldog. These all give a really individual style, and if you can work out which is the best sort of boxer to build to suit your style of gameplay you gain an edge.

Once you've chosen your boxer, the build-up to the fight begins. First choose the opponent to challenge. Initially, you can only challenge one of two lowest ranked boxers because you're new to the circuit and the big boys aren't interested in small fry. It takes quite a while to build up a reputation and, like anything else in life, you have to fight consistently well if you want to get anywhere in your career.

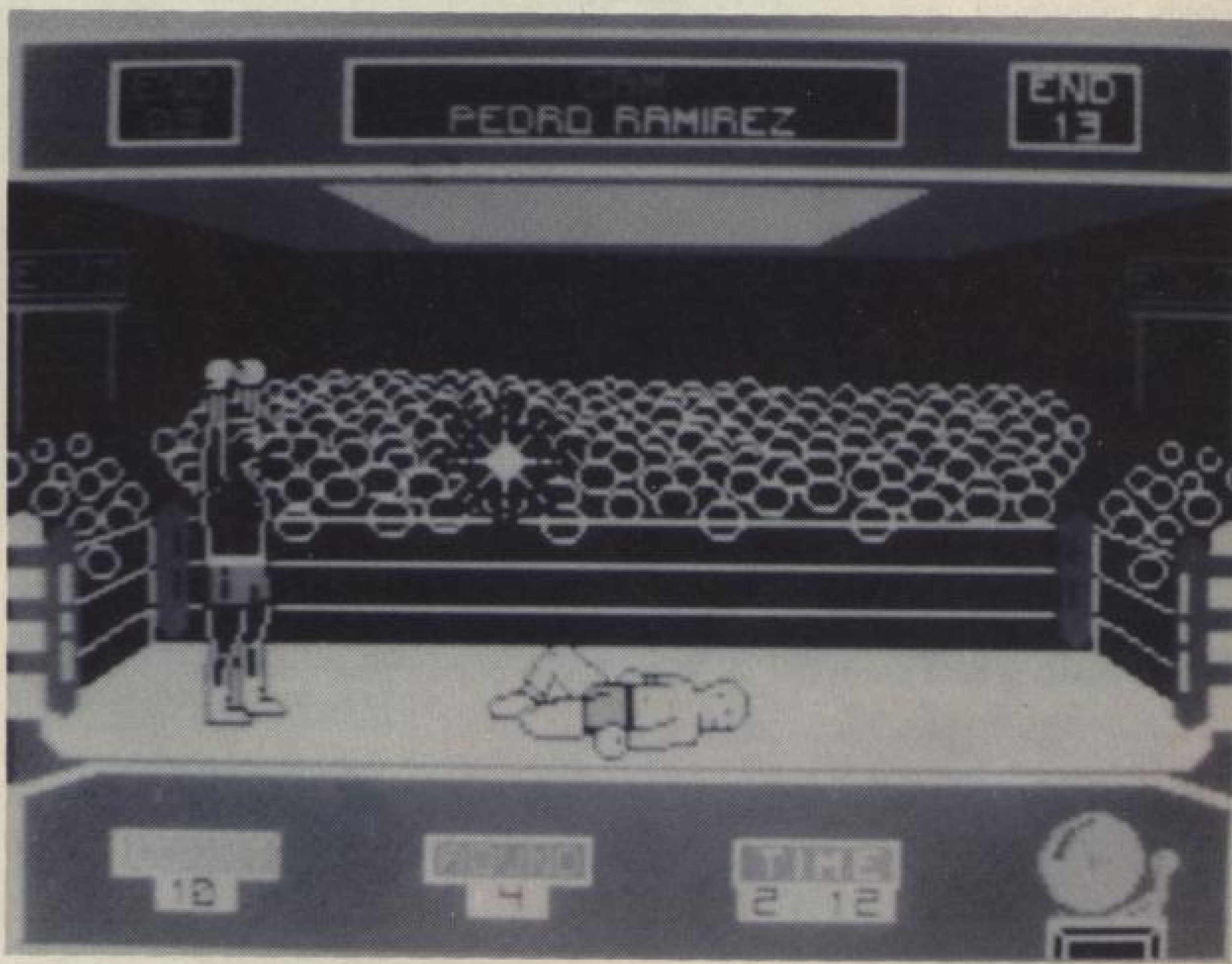
With an opponent lined up, it's wise to get in a spot of training. You're told what sort of fight you'll be having, the boxer's form and how many weeks preparation there is before the fight. Training time has to be allocated to five different routines: road work, light bag, heavy bag, weights and spar time. This isn't to be taken light heartedly — with careful training it's possible to fine-tune your boxer but if you're not careful you could end up giving your boxer massive strength while leaving him with very little stamina.

With training behind you, it's into the ring. Fighting takes place in a packed arena with your boxer viewed from the side in semi 3D. The boxers can move backwards and forwards and have a total of nine moves available to them. Punches and defensive moves are controlled using up/down/left/right, and the four direction keys in con junction with fire — much the same as in *Way of the Exploding Fist*. Abandoning the joystick or keyboard puts the boxer into automatic defence mode, which is useful against body blows from the opposing fighter. Punches under your control include jabs, hooks, cross punches, uppercuts, body blows and also a 'guard up' so you can ward off an attacking opponent without getting hurt.

The time, round number, points, endurance and count are all displayed on screen during the bout, with the count coming into action when one of you gets knocked down. Between rounds, you're given an update of your condition and are told how the crowd is reacting, which helps you decide how to fight the next round — you can go for a knockout, fight defensively, tire your opponent or try to gain points.

As you boxer wins fights he moves up the elite ranks of boxing and can challenge stronger opponents (there are nineteen in all), eventually getting to challenge McGuigan himself. Each of the challengers has his own 'personality' and an individual fighting style. Your opponents get progressively tougher and more determined, becoming more strong, skilful and cunning the higher up the echelons you go.

If you want to slug it out with a friend (or enemy) without getting bruised, a two player option allows you to battle it out with a human opponent in a race to the top slot.



CRITICISM

● **'There is no shortage of instructions for this program: every aspect of the game is explained down the the very last detail! Both the strategic elements and presentation are very good, but unfortunately I found the game itself to be too hard to play. Unlike programs such as *Fist* and *Kung-Fu*, it is very hard to place an accurate hit on your opponent. If you think you'll be able to master it, it may be worth having a go at, but I'm afraid I didn't find it too appealing.'**

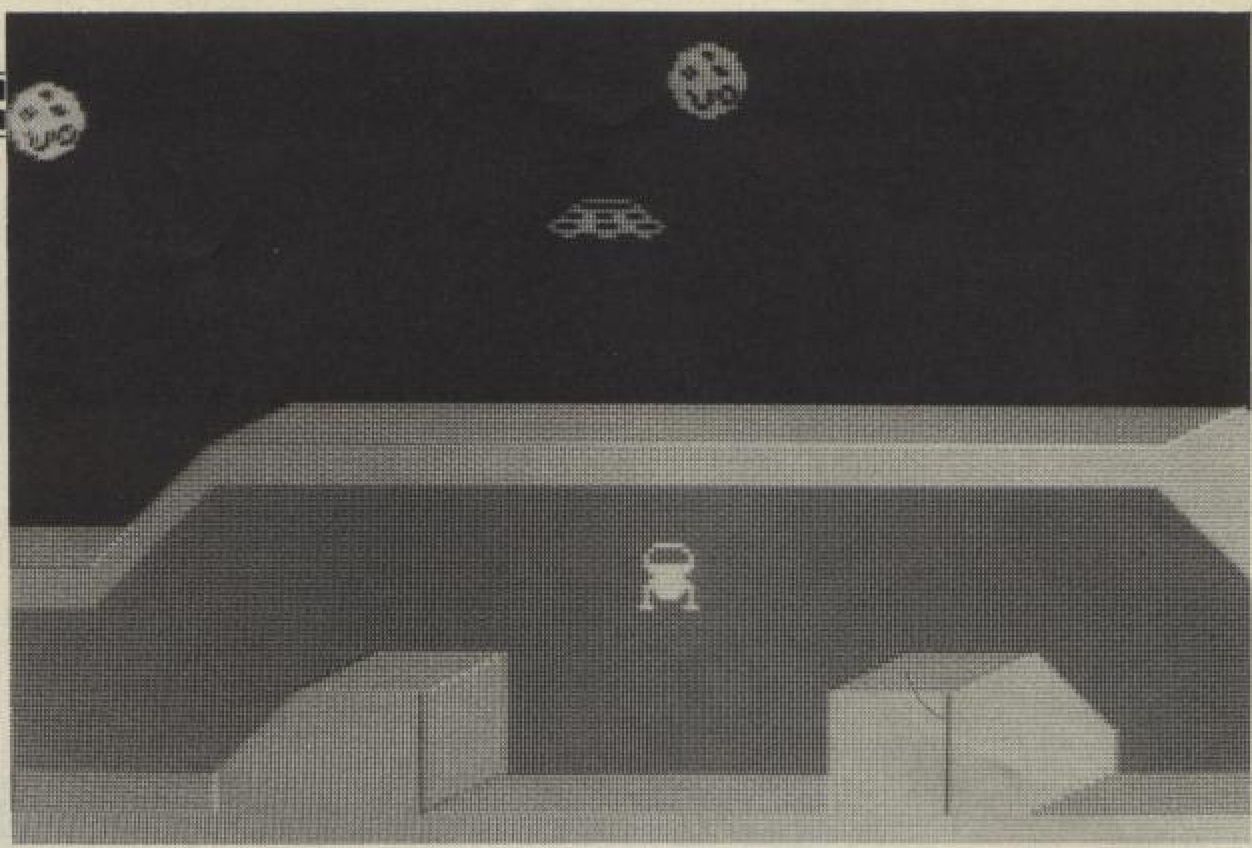
● *'I found* Barry McGuigan's Boxing *to be a totally absorbing game. For a start it's nice and colourful and unlike* Frank Bruno's, *you have a good amount of control over your boxer. Before each fight you're given time to train to build up aspects of your character that you may feel are lacking, making the game very realistic to play — if you muck up the training then it's nobody else's fault but your own. The actual fight sequence is well animated and the moves available are well chosen. One regret I had concerned the way the computer controls all left or right movement. Overall,* BM's Boxing *is a good game and well worth its asking price.'*

● 'I love fight simulators, and *Barry McGuigan's Boxing* is the best I've played. It generates a really great atmosphere as you try to battle your way to become the World Champion. The design-a-boxer option is excellent and allows you to build up your very own boxers. The graphics are excellent too, with big, detailed sprites and some nice touches, like cameras flashing in the audience when a boxer is KO'ed. With its masses of options and brilliant gameplay this has got to be the best boxing simulation on the market — get it.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2 and Protek
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: good, avoids attributes
Graphics: big, detailed and well animated characters and some nice touches
Sound: jolly little jingles and good noises
Skill levels: 19 different boxers
Screens: N/A
General rating: an excellent boxing game

Use of computer	91%
Graphics	89%
Playability	86%
Getting started	88%
Addictive qualities	85%
Value for money	87%
Overall	**88%**



1985

Producer: Mastertronic
Retail price: **£1.99**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Severn Software**

Big Brother's regime has collapsed. Earth needs energy, and needs it fast. You've been given the task of saving the world. In the days of the old republic, nuclear plasma — an excellent powersource — was stored on four different planets. For years the pods have remained harmless, sitting on the different worlds inside rocky caverns. Equipped with a highly manoeuverable but totally unarmed ship it's your job to fly over the pods and capture them one by one with your ship's tractor beam.

The plan is fine, but one thing everyone forgot was the automatic defence system created by the long gone empire. As your ship approaches, ancient gun housings burst into life. Your only hope is to dodge the incoming shells.

Your first problem with playing *1985* is encountered when travelling to one of the four planets. You begin on a moon near to the four podzones, and your craft is moored in a sort of hangar construction. When the game starts, the mooring beams pull away leaving your spaceship drifting in mid air. Gravity affects your ship and it starts to drift down. A short burst of thrust is needed to avoid bashing into the hangar walls.

The spacecraft is a bit like the one in *Asteroids*: it can rotate and thrust, and since the moon and all the planets the pods are housed on are airless, there's no friction at all. A short pulse of throttle and you're liable to drift for ages. This makes it very easy to crash into things. Once out the hangar, you have a choice of four planets sitting in the sky. Fly towards one of the planets and a transporter beam whips the ship down to the world's surface.

Your ship constantly uses fuel when going after a pod, and if the fuel bar at the bottom of the screen indicates an empty tank, you crash. Once the plasma is collected, some of the energy is syphoned into the ship and the fuel bar at the bottom of the screen is replenished. The main screen takes up the top three quarters of the display, showing the planet in a pseudo three dimensional view. As the craft nears the edge of the screen, more scenery scrolls into view.

Gun emplacements are quite deadly, firing slow bullets at the spaceship. Though they look very easy to dodge, it soon becomes all too easy collide with a shell and die. Sinister yellow spaceships patrol the skies of the four plasma worlds. They don't take an active stand against your mission but represent an extra hazard to avoid.

Once the four sheets have been negotiated, there's an extra stage where the fusion core itself is held. Trying to rescue this little goody is not very easy at all, but the rewards are very much worth it.

CRITICISM

● **'1985 is a version of the arcade classic** Gravitar **and though Mastertronic wisely didn't try and recreate the vector graphics the end effect isn't really all that impressive. Though I don't actually hate this game it inspired a real indifference. Graphically it looks like a throwback from early Spectrum software days: the colours are garish and the movement is not very good. While the game is meant to feature proper artificial interia and gravity, it fails because it is just too jerky. Admittedly, about a year ago, I might have got a bit enthusiastic about** 1985 **but nowadays it's just old hat.'**

● *'This is the kind of game that gives budget software a bad name. Graphically there is a great deal of flicker, and lots of attribute problems. The graphics are also unvaried and boring; as for sound there are only a few spot effects here and there. Controlling your craft is hard at first, but it gets easier after a little practise. There isn't really enough going on for* 1985 *to be any fun.'*

● 'Not exactly a thrilling plot: find a few nuclear pods on a few planets. I was hoping that the game itself would compensate for it, but it doesn't. It never ceases to amaze me how Mastertronic can produce a nice professional game like *Soul of a Robot* one day,then churn out some utter garbage like *1985*. Sorry, Masterchroni.. er.. tronic, but *1985* is the wrong time for this. 1982 would have been more appropriate.'



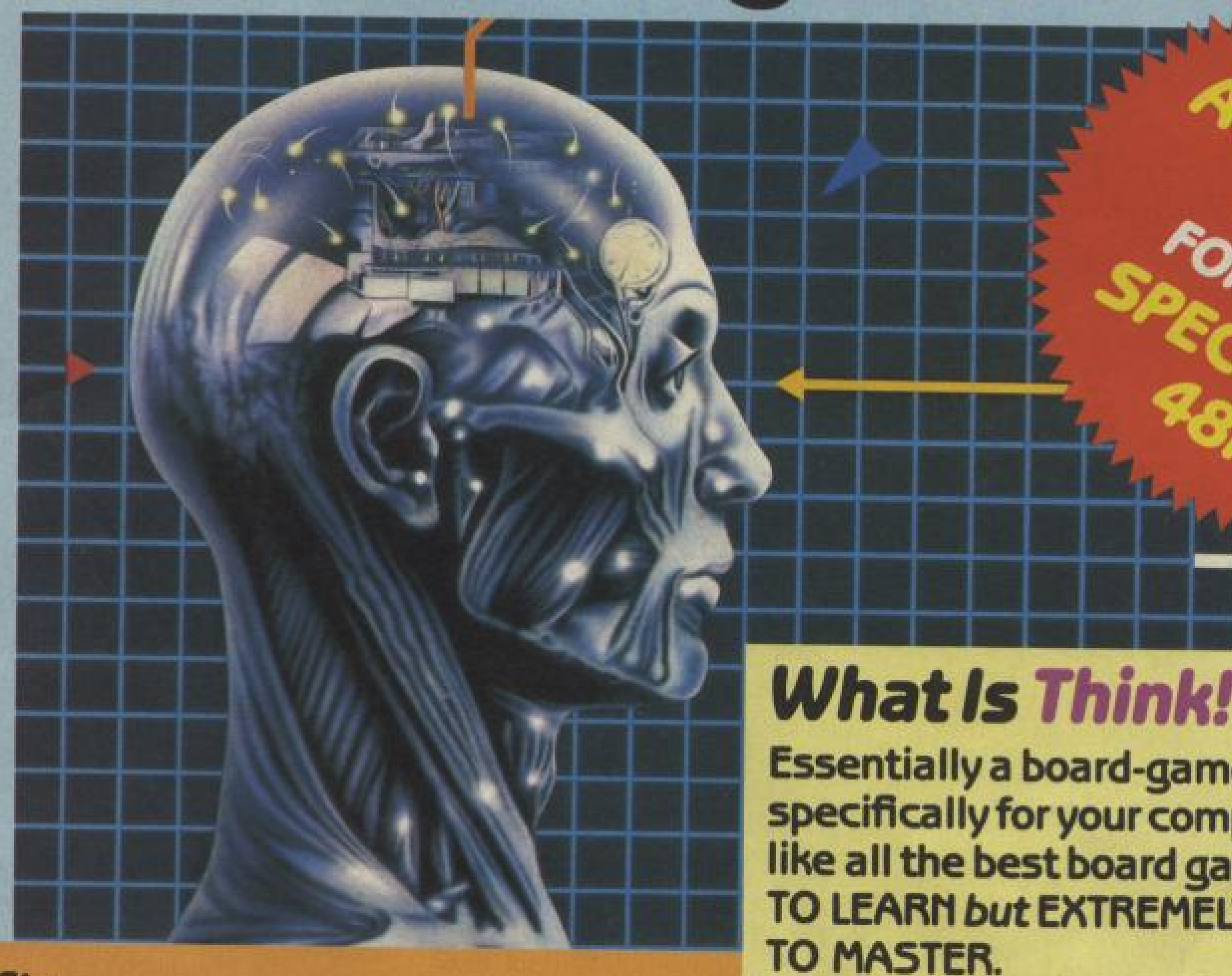
COMMENTS

Control keys: Z/X rotate left/right, SPACE for thrust and symbol shift for tractor beam
Joystick: Kempston
Keyboard play: responsive
Use of colour: nasty attribute clash when screen scrolls
Graphics: a bit old fashioned and definitely not exceptional
Sound: irritating noise throughout game plus tatty death noise
Skill levels: one
Screens: six
General rating: Not bad, but really ancient in comparison to Mastertronic's recent offerings

Use of computer	19%
Graphics	21%
Playability	12%
Getting started	22%
Addictive qualities	17%
Value for money	25%
Overall	**21%**

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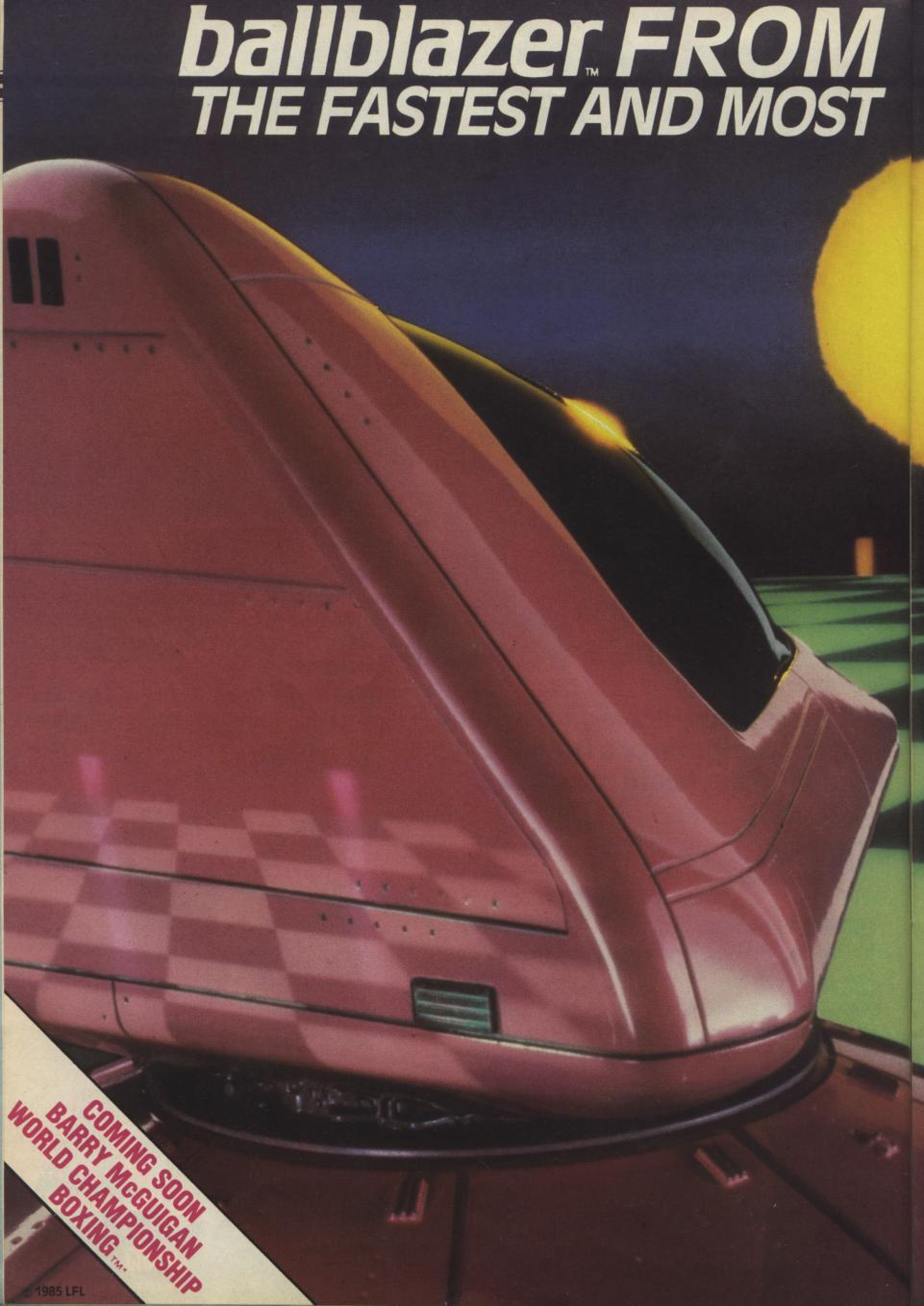


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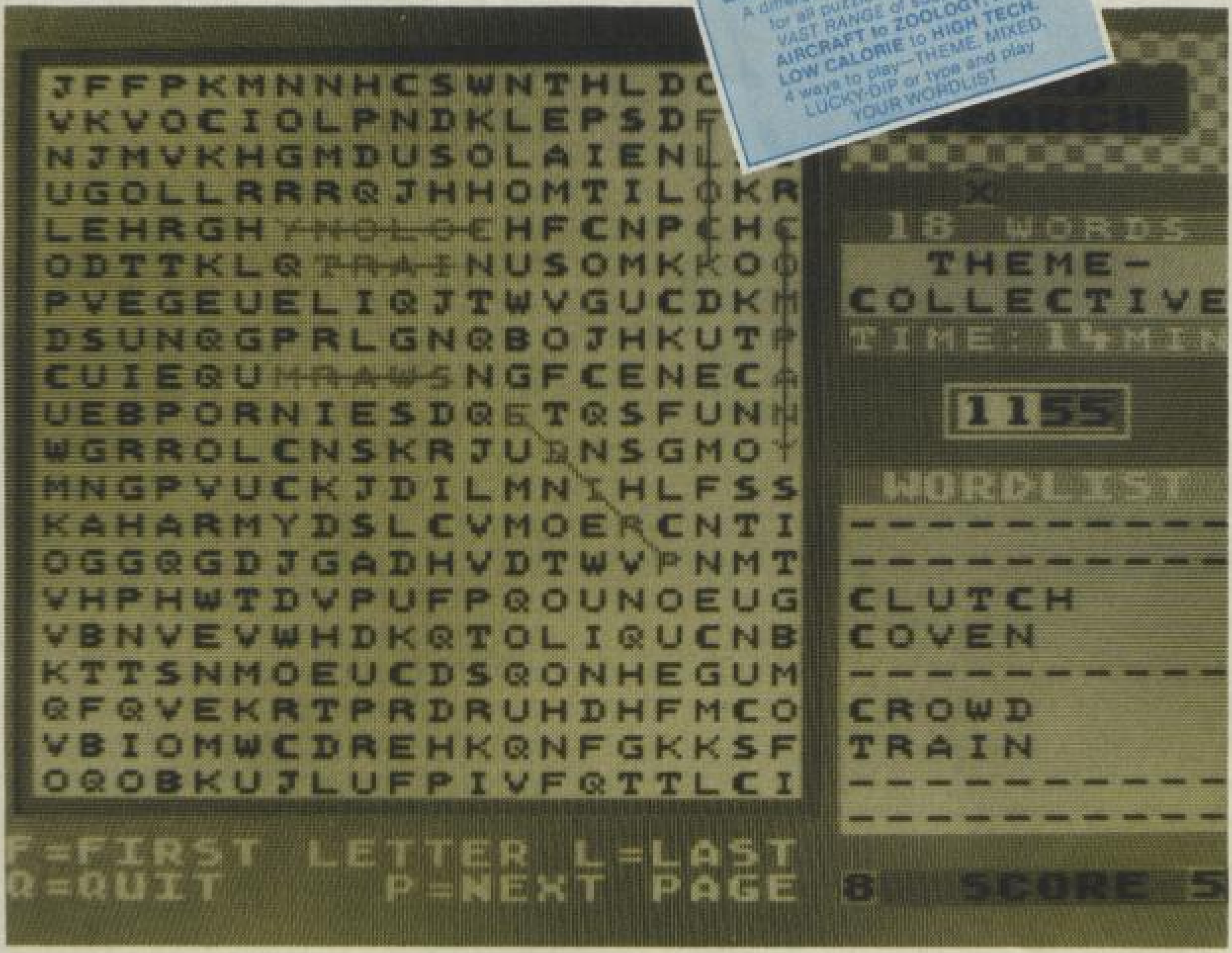
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COMPUTER WORDSEARCH





Producer: Softfirm
Retail price: **£6.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **J Tomkins**

Computer-Wordsearch puts those word-finding puzzles beloved of Competition Minions and Puzzle Fans onto your Spectrum's screen, and boasts a "vast range" of subjects from which wordsearch puzzles can be built — over a hundred are available from the subject menu once the game's loaded.

The main menu screen provides four options to choose between: words on a set theme, which gives access to the submenu of subjects and allows the player to choose how many words the square will contain (9, 18 or 27); mixed words taken from a variety of subject areas (the player can chose to have 9 or 18 words in a mixed square); lucky dip, which selects a subject area and the number of words that will be in the square at random, and finally, the player can opt to enter up to eighteen words of 2 to 10 letters for inclusion in a specially created wordsquare. Once the type of wordsquare desired has been selected and the number of words it contains entered if appropriate, the program then constructs the wordsquare in the playing area.

All the wordsquares are 20 columns by 20 rows and are drawn row by row into a box which occupies over half the screen area. To the right of the main playing area are the status panels. One gives details about the square currently being played, including the number of words it contains, the theme of the square and the target time for finding all the words hidden away in the grid. There is a counter, which decrements in real time to remind you that you are supposed to be up against the clock, but a cheat mode (press H) allows you to suspend the passage of time — well halt the clock, anyway — in order to have a good think. Below the counter is a display area which lists nine of the words which have to be found. This can be paged if the square contains more than nine words. A scoreline advises the state of play.

Once a square has been entered in the main playing area, the cursor keys control a flashing block which can be moved around to cover letters in the grid. When a word has been found the cursor needs to be moved over its first letter and the F key depressed, then over its last letter and the L key hit thus telling the computer that a word has been discovered. If the cursor has been used correctly, the word is then struck through with a blue line on the grid and removed from the wordlist.

At any time in a searching session it is possible to quit the game, and before returning to the main menu screen the computer strikes through all the words in the square that have not been found — thus proving to the player that they WERE there all the time!

If 20 x 20 wordsquares suddenly start appearing in the magazine, you can be sure that the Competition Minion has got hold of this program — it allows you to print out a wordsearch you have created . . .

CRITICISM

● **'If you're keen on wordsearch puzzles, this game will go down well with you, despite the fact that it is not exactly brilliantly programmed. For instance, if you opt to make up your own wordsquare and don't actually put any words in it — hitting enter against the first word — the program merrily prints out a square, telling you that the square contains 0 words and that you have 4 minutes to find them. Do nothing for a minute, and pandemonium breaks loose: the border starts flashing, the beeper chirps away and the message "congratulations — all words found" scampers across the bottom of the screen. Pressing a key restores normality. While you can print out your own squares, it's a shame that the program doesn't allow you to print out the squares it generates itself from words it holds in memory — poring over the letters on the screen can get a bit tiring after a while. I can't be bothered with wordsearch puzzles at the best of times, so wouldn't invest in this game — but if you like such puzzles . . . .**

● *'I can't really see the point of writing this sort of program on a computer — you can get books and books full of wordsearches for less than 5% of the asking price. The actual program isn't too bad and works quite well, the only problem is reading the telly screen like you would a book — some of the colour schemes are rather garish and eyeball strain sets in after a while. I suppose if you really enjoy making up wordsquares and you need a computer to help you to do so then this is find, but personally I find the whole thing rather futile.'*

● 'A nice try at capturing a slot in the market. Somehow, though, I get the impression that even wordsearch fanatics will prefer the 'traditional' pencil and paper implementation. Peering at the little letters on a TV screen soon gets tiring, I found. The actual programming is fairly basic — there's no gloss to the package. At £6.95 this game is grossly overpriced — £1.99 would have been fairer. Admittedly, you get a finite number of wordsquares in puzzle magazines for seven pounds, but in terms of Spectrum games you can get much better value than *Computer Wordsearch*. Compare this game to *Zoids*, for instance, which is only a pound dearer . . .'

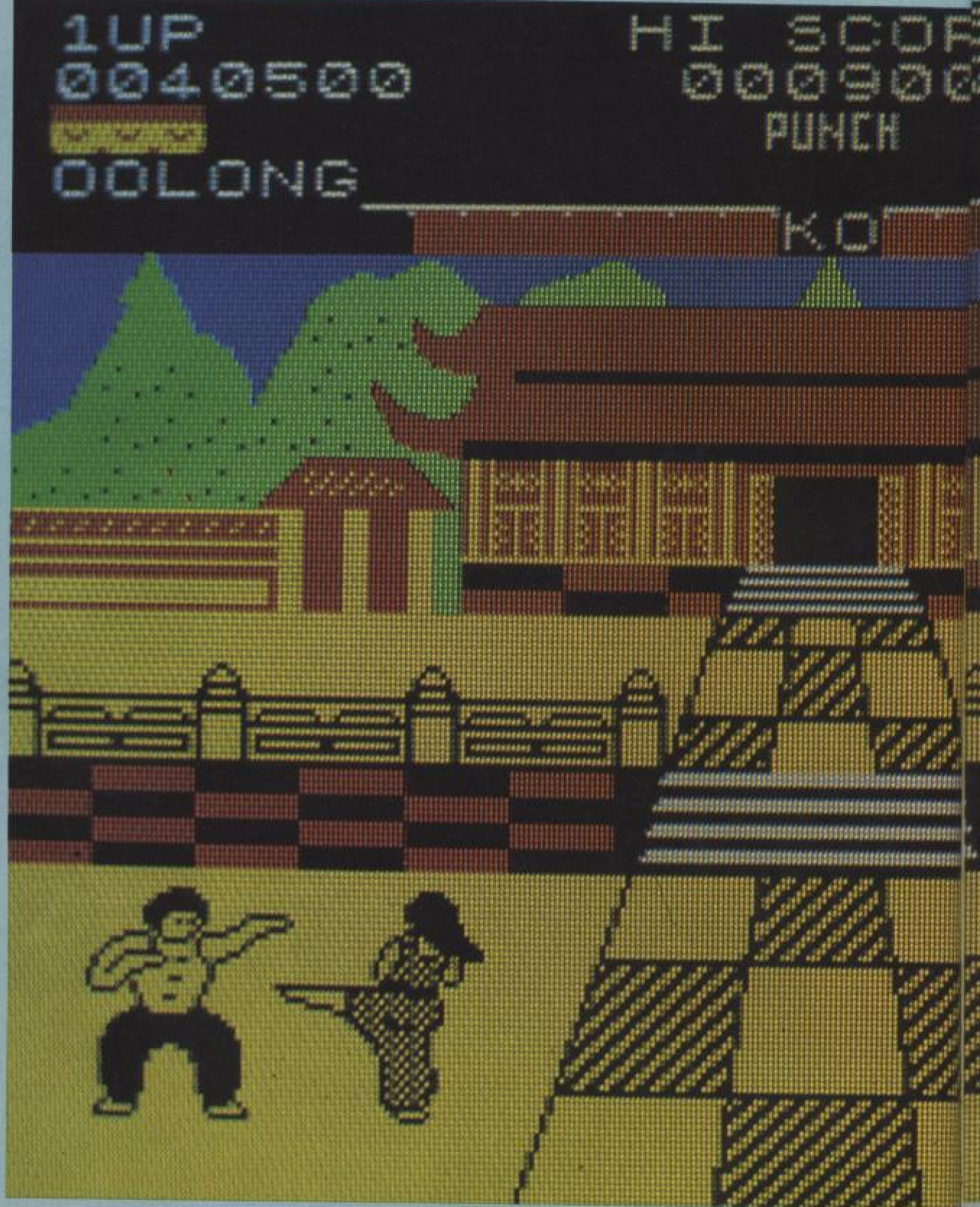
COMMENTS

Control keys: cursor keys to control flashing cursor, F to mark first letter in a found word, L to mark last letter, H to pause, Q to Quit
Joystick: Cursor if you wanted
Keyboard play: perfectly adequate
Use of colour: a bit garish
Graphics: unsubtle — text a bit tiring to read
Sound: beep!
Skill levels: one
Screens: menus and main wordsquare
General rating: probably only for the most ardent worsearch freak

Use of computer	**41%**
Graphics	**39%**
Playability	**53%**
Getting started	**60%**
Addictive qualities	**32%**
Value for money	**28%**
Overall	**33%**

A CRASH Smash

Y·I·E A·R K·U·N·G



YIE AR KUNG FU

Producer: Imagine
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author:

The current fad for martial arts games continues with Imagine's latest arcade conversion *Yie Ar Kung Fu*. The game has its roots firmly imbedded in the original Japanese Konami arcade game and contains the same opponents and controls, as well as two of the backdrops from the coin-op version.

The game scenario is quite simple and typically Japanese. You take the role of humble Oolong who, for reasons best known to himself, has to follow in the footsteps of his father and honour his family by becoming a Kung Fu Grand Master. To do this he has to defeat the opponents who confront him on his quest. These rather odd-looking adversaries vary from huge jelly like giants who have the ability to fly across the screen at you, to petite females who enjoy trying to kill you by flinging their fans at you.

Oolong, being a dab hand at the Kung Fu routine has sixteen special moves to confound, confuse and generally kill off his opponents with. All these are accessed via the joystick or nine keys, in similar fashion to *International Karate*. Some of the moves, such as the roundhouse, flying kick and leg sweep, will be familiar to those who already have a martial arts program gracing their software collection. Others, like flying and leaping punches, the stride punch and ground kick are totally new. Points are awarded for well executed moves and a bonus life is given if you manage to reach 20,000 points.

When fighting you have the choice of three different modes: walking mode, punching mode, and kicking mode. You start the game in walking mode and when you're near enough to your opponent you have the option of being able to either kick or use your fists.

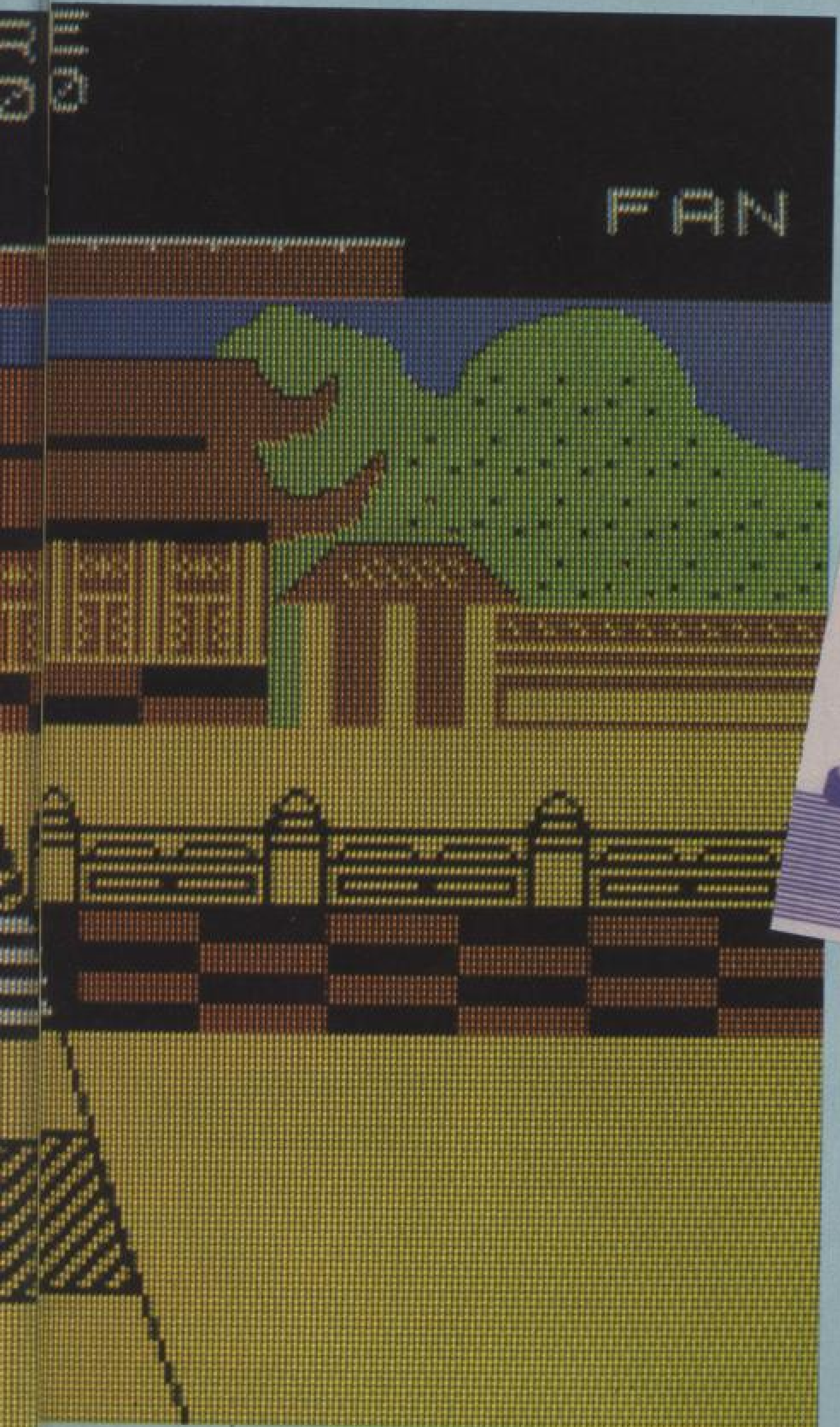
At the start of the game, both you and your opponent are given a certain amount of energy which is shown on-screen in the form of a bar. If you get hit, your bar diminishes slightly. To defeat your opponent you have to make his or her energy bar reach zero before yours does. If you manage to do that then you are promoted to the next, more difficult opponent with your energy level restored to maximum; if you don't win, then you lose one of your five lives and have to tackle the same opponent again.

Each combatant has a unique way of fighting and you need to modify your fighting strategy in order to win. Some of the opponents carry weapons — poles, throwing stars, shields, swords, sticks and fans which have to be jumped over or ducked under, while avoiding the usual melee of punches and kicks. If you manage to beat the final opponent Oolong becomes a Grand Master, and has to challenge the same set of opponents all over again — only this time they're meaner and faster.

CRITICISM

● **'I found this to be a better game than** *Way of the Exploding Fist* **because of its variety. There are nine different opponents and each one is portrayed with very good graphics indeed. The only real disappointment for me is that the level of difficulty is a little low to start with, and it is easy to see all the opponents in the first few goes. To be fair though, the second round proves to be far more difficult and things start to get really hectic. If you didn't get** Fist, **and you want a good mince em up, get this. Even if you did, this is well worth considering because of its different approach and the variety of opponents it offers.'**

● 'Yie Ar Kung Fu *is an excellent game and really shows that Imagine are swiftly becoming one of the best software development houses in Britain. It's easily the best of the Spectrum martial arts programs because of the variety of characters and excellent arcade style playability. The graphics are cleverly designed and avoid attribute problems — something Spectrum owners*





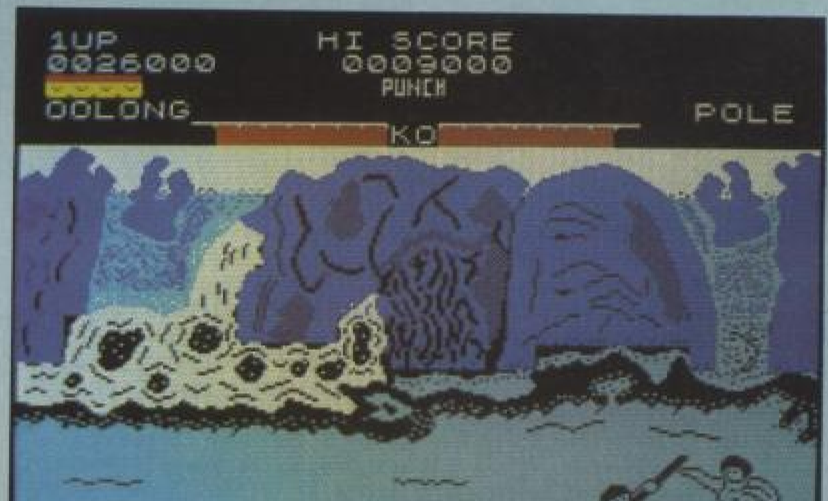
have had to live with for too long. The only real flaw in the program is that a player can dispose of the first set of opponents very easily: once you've beaten them you know what will come next. When compared with *Fist* at least there is variety. I hope Imagine can continue their high standards — if they do then *Ping Pong* and *Comic Bakery* should be programs to await with anticipation.'

● 'A great game! The backgrounds are very colourful — it's just a shame that there are only two of them. The game as a whole is quite a good conversion of the arcade classic, but of course lacks the solid colourful sprites of the arcade machines. The inter-fight jingles are very jolly even if they do seem to get longer when you want to get on with the smashing and bashing. The animation is very good and far more relative to the action than *Exploding Fist*. The energy bar idea is a great one, and makes the game really nailbiting, especially when you get in a fast and furious scrap with both bars diminishing rapidly. My only complaint is that the game tends to be a bit too easy — even easier than *Exploding Fist*. I beat everyone on my second go! When you finish, you just go back to fight Buchu, which is a bit of a let down, even if he is a better opponent second time around.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2
Keyboard play: responsive, but gets tangled
Use of colour: excellent, and avoids attributes
Graphics: large, well animated characters on pretty backdrops
Sound: jolly jingles
Skill levels: difficulty increases as you go through the screens
Screens: nine different opponents
General rating: another excellent Imagine conversion

Use of computer	86%
Graphics	93%
Playability	89%
Getting started	85%
Addictive qualities	93%
Value for money	88%
Overall	**92%**



S•W•E•E•V•O•S W•O•R•L•D

SWEEVO'S WORLD

Producer: Gargoyle Games
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**
Authors: **Greg Follis and Roy Carter**

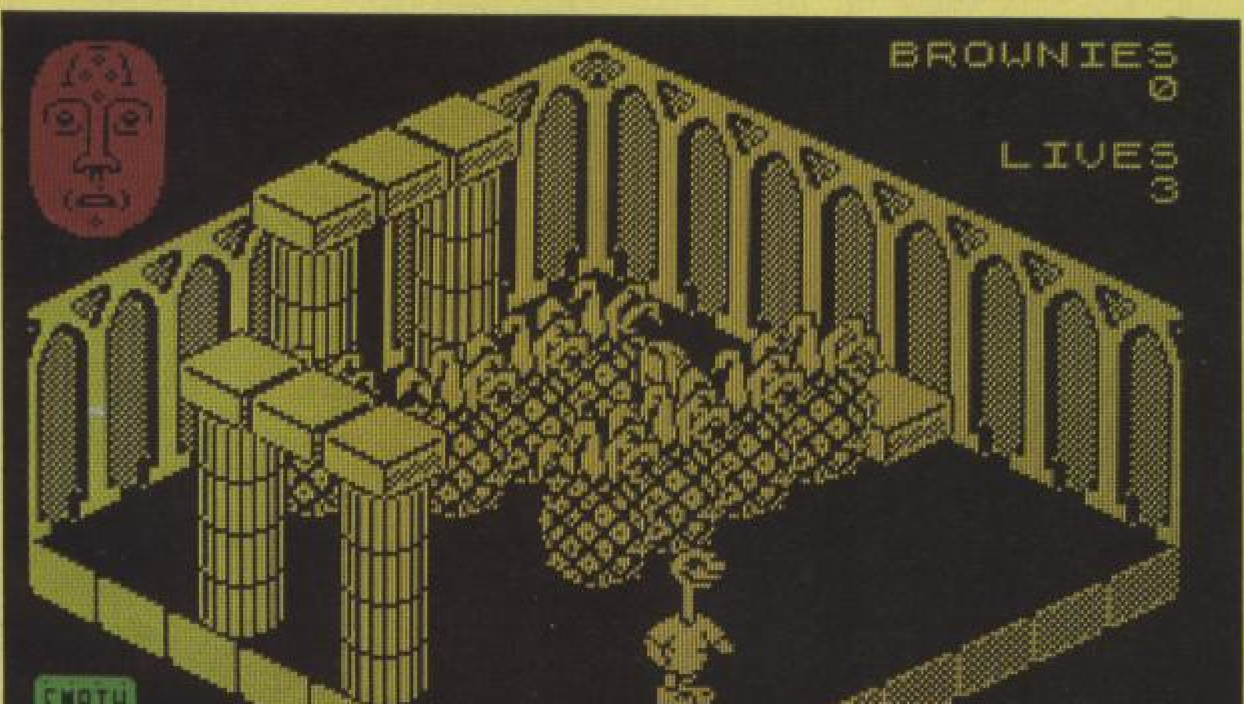
Imagine a world full of strange beings and equally strange objects. A world overpopulated with oversized fruit, deadly to the touch. A world shown in full isometric 3D perspective, similar to Ultimate's *Knight Lore* and *Alien 8 — Sweevo's World*? Not quite, for only if Sweevo can successfully contend with all the dangers Knutz Folly has to offer, can it possibly be renamed as such.

As you may have gleaned from the two previous previews, Knutz Folly is an artificial planetoid, built by the highly deranged Baron Knutz for his seemingly estranged wife Hazel, before he went totally out of his tree. A number of decidedly strange life forms live in this strange environment, all as weird as their creator. Each group of organisms must be disposed of in a particular way — the Horrible Little Girls, or Minxes, can be mashed by dropping teddies on their heads, for instance. The Minxes and Goose Stepping Dictators are extremely dangerous and quick with it, so should you enter a room containing either, beware!

Widgers and Geese on the other hand, are harmless, but expendable all the same. Brownies sit quietly about the planet and can be collected for extra 'Brownie' points. Further marks are also awarded for tidiness at the end of the game.

Sweevo has five lives and one is lost every time he tires. Such a state arises whenever he is poked from behind (literally) or knocked over four times from running into a static object such as a skull or piece of fruit. Sweevo's current physical state is shown in the top left of the screen and is represented by a face, looking very much like our very own Graeme Kidd minus cranial fluff. As his energy decreases, the face becomes more and more sorrowful looking, until it turns into a skull, when he finally kicks it. If energy is running a bit low, Sweevo can sneak up behind one of the eight Geese which stump around the playing area. If he gives them a big enough fright, they lay a Golden Erg (ouch!) which is a source of extra energy.

Hidden away in nearly two hundred screens split into four levels is a whole range of puzzles of differing difficulty. Each puzzle, once solved, gives the player useful objects such as tin cans. These are then used to 'solve' further puzzles. However, in order to complete the game, you must also eradicate all life forms . . . and tidy up after you!



CRITICISM

● **'I'm not a great fan of Gargoyle's previous offerings, such as** Tir Na Nog **and** Dun Darach, **although I can appreciate why they are so popular.** Sweevo's World **on the other hand, appeals to me greatly, with its humorous and unusual approach. The puzzles are, on the whole, very logical, but because they are so straightforward it makes them that much harder. Graphically,** Sweevo's **is stunning, with superbly defined and animated characters, and an impressive overall speed. The sound is also exceptional — the music on the title screen is some of the best I've heard issuing forth from the Spectrum. There's not much more to say about** Sweevo's **other than it's brilliant and if you don't buy it or try it you won't know what you're missing.'**

● *'*Knight Lore *made a big impression, mainly ,I felt because of the revolutionary 3D graphics. 'Gargoyle's latest offering is very derivative graphically — but the game content is very different . . . .* Sweevo's World *is the logical progression from* Knight Lore *with even better piccies, a very interesting inlay, nice sound and, of course the GAME! There's not much I can say about the graphic style: except I've not seen anything quite like these characters before!* Sweevo's *is certainly something special. Don't get the idea that it's as serious as previous Gargoyle releases; it's basically a nice bit of fun even if, like me, you don't feel up to solving any problems.'*

● 'Up until now most of Gargoyle's products have been arcade adventures which can be very daunting to us lesser mortals, but with the advent of *Sweevo's World* all that has changed. If you can remember, way back in the mists of time (about a year ago in fact), Ultimate came out with two graphically stunning games, *Knightlore* and *Alien 8*. Gargoyle have improved on that almost perfect formula and brought us a graphically superb game which is immense fun to play. The speed at which the game operates is breathtaking, and leaves *Fairlight* standing still, literally. If all these arcade adventures have been plaguing you recently and you're in the mood for a bit of honest fun, then I doubt you could find a better alternative than *Sweevo's World*.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q, W, E, R, T to move 'left', Y, U, I, O, P to move 'up', A, S, D, F, G to move 'down', H, J, K, L, ENTER to move 'right' and bottom row to pick up/drop
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2 and Cursor
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: single colour display to avoid attribute problems
Graphics: exceptionally good, fast 3D isometric display
Sound: excellent title screen music, although it can prove irritating
Skill levels: one
Screens: 184
General rating: a novel and humorous approach to the Ultimate style of game

Use of computer	90%
Graphics	95%
Playability	96%
Getting started	94%
Addictive qualities	95%
Value for money	95%
Overall	**95%**


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This is the first issue of 1986, yet I'm writing before Christmas (just — and if I don't get a move on there won't be any turkey left — well duck actually, Ludlow duck is justly famed.)

The Big Thing recently has been the cover of December's issue of CRASH and the Domark adverts for *Friday the 13th*. This seems to have sparked off a controversy of sweeping proportions, with some parents cancelling their orders for the magazine. More of that in due course. Lots have written in with things to say about the game *Elite* from Firebird — some nice things about the game, some unpleasant things to say about Lenslok. In fact Lenslok looks all set to take over from turbo loaders as The Big Moan.

I've received a massive mailbag of very interesting letters this month and picking one out for special mention has proved difficult, but in the end I opted for this one begging for some change in advertising attitudes from the software companies.

WHERE ARE THE GAMES?

Dear Mr Mangram,
Oh what a weird world this is! (The games world, stupid). Flicking through the millionth or so issue of CRASH (well, it seems like it) I see ... ADVERTISEMENTS. (Sorry, didn't mean to scare you!)

Now what's wrong with THOSE I hear you say. Well, at a glance, nothing, but how about trying to buy the games that the advertisements advertise? Let me give you an example. A while ago, I saw an ad for *Rambo* by Ocean. Ha! I thought probably their Xmas 86 release, but what's this? Spectrum version £7.95 — OUT NOW! So off I went, down to Southend to investigate. Investigate indeed:

'Hello, could I have *Rambo* for the 48K Spectrum. It's by Ocean'

'*Rambo*? (Heh, heh) Sorry mate. It's not out yet.'

'But it says so here!', I said, holding out my ad.

'Well we haven't got it. We might have it in about ...' etc etc

So, I went home a sadder, but wiser person (every shop's reply was the same). Couple of weeks later (got my new CRASH) I was at home and some of my mates were down town. The rung me from a box. They'd seen *Rambo* and were impressed. On the Spectrum? Not on your Quickshot, mate! The Commodore version wasn't even supposed to be out yet, let alone in the furthest reaches of Southend. So Ocean, and all the other companies: US Gold, Elite etc, WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE PLAYING AT?

I must sign off, I've got to take some more Valium before I have a violent attack of depression!
John Deamer, Benfleet, Essex

This is quite a common subject in letters. However, I think the plea is eloquent enough to get the software award for letter of the month, so that's £20 worth on its way to you, John. Meantime, Here's another on the same theme ...
LM

NON EXISTENCE-IAL PHILOSOPHY

Dear CRASH,
Please do something! I can't stand it anymore. Why must software houses advertise games two or three months before they are even finished? Eh? Tell me why!

Looking through your 'pretty damn devastating' magazine you can find at least ten ads for games that are not yet on sale. A case in point is *Swords and Sorcery* which has now been in development for roughly a year. Why should PSS be allowed to take consumers' cash for a game that has not (as far as I can tell) been finished yet? It is morally and ethically wrong.

Also there was *Tomahawk* which has been advertised in your mag since the year dot. It has now surfaced way off schedule. If I had sent off £10 when the first ad appeared, I would now be well displeased to say the least. Do the ASA (Advertising Standards Authority) check out such cases?

I am now worried about sending off large cheques to software houses for games that only exist in a programmer's imagination. Can't the influential Big Cheeses at CRASH Towers get someone to pass a law about advertising a product that does not exist? I am sure other readers of CRASH will agree that adverts should only be placed in mags when the product is ready for sale.

Perhaps we can put an end to 'teasers' that encourage people to buy games that they haven't seen. I am sure that owners of *The Great Space Race* would agree that, had they seen the game beforehand, they wouldn't have splashed the cash so easily. There is a moral to this letter!
AACR WISOC (An Angry CRASH Reader Who Is Short Of Cash), Ringwood, Hants

It's annoying, I know, but if it's any consolation, software houses don't like this happening either, because it tends to hit sales if a program misses its promotional 'window'. However, sometimes things just go wrong with finishing a game and bearing in mind the software house has to book its advertising many weeks before an issue appears, there is always a danger of saying 'OUT NOW' when it's not.

As to product that is advertised long before it emerges, should you have sent cash in good faith, then of course you are entitled to receive a refund after 28 days if you opt not to hang on for the product. In general, it seems to me that these two writers have a very strong point. The worst of this kind of advertising — of a completely unfinished game — is helping to damage the industry.
LM

SOFTWORE CHIRP



This software chart was in our local paper
Andrew Graham, Ponteland, Newcastle-upon-Tyne



THAT Cover

Dear CRASH Magazine
I was disgusted at the horrific picture on the December issue of your Publication. My younger brother, who receives your magazine monthly, is only nine and I hardly think the covers are suitable for that age range and over. I really think that the pictures from the film inside were totally unnecessary and quite disturbing. I also don't really see what skimpily clad women have to do with computers (Issue 21 and others)! A lot of the covers have great sexual overtones and are totally irrelevant
Mellany Robinson, Camberley, Surrey

You are not, to be fair, the only person to complain about the December cover of CRASH. The office received quite a number of complaints, including one lady who also wrote complaining to the Press Council. Their reaction was to pass on the complaint, and Graeme Kidd wrote to her. In fact, though she objected to the cover, her real cause for upset was the Domark advertisement for Friday the 13th, *which has appeared in most computer magazines. I'll give my views in a moment after one or two others have had their say. As to the 'sexual' overtones of the covers, this seems a very overstated point of view. In 24 months the only covers that come to mind that might fit your bill are; No 2, the 'King Kong' one, where a girl is seen grasped in Kong's paw — very much based on the original film theme; No 17, where I suppose the members of Frankie Goes To Hollywood dressed in their birthday suits as cherubs* **might** *be considered sexual; and No 18, the cover based loosely on the game Dun Darach, where Skar holds Loeg in bondage. Whether these covers can strictly be said to be 'sexual' is very much open to interpretation, and in any event, to refer to three covers out of 24 as 'a lot' seems to be a gross exaggeration.*
The next reader has this to say ...

Dear Sir
By what I am about to write I may be branded a reactionary old fuddy-duddy (I'm 37 years old), but I feel it needs to be said. The cover to the December (Xmas — peace and goodwill to all men) Issue has transcended the bounds of good taste. Whilst I'm all for alien zapping and gobs of green blood, the *Friday 13th* theme is totally sick and horrific.
My nine year old son and eleven year old daughter were horrified by the cover, the spurting blood depicted is obviously meant to be human, and page 148 — Mark and Dominic, obviously intelligent guys, words fail me!
The current spate of sick and horrific computer games is an unnecessary trend which I would have thought influential magazines such as yours would not promote to impressionable youngsters who are your main reader group — where will it end, one wonders — computerised sex orgies for the under fifteens?
RA Barustain, Kidderminster, Worcs
PS. Even the *Friday 13th* Ad is puke-making.

This is the second complaint that has started by attacking the violence implied in the cover illustration and ended by linking it to sex, which certainly plays no part in the cover — it really makes **me** *wonder where it will all end!*
And the next, please ...

Dear Sir Lloyd,
When I read the letters complaining about the gory pictures in certain issues of that well-above-average publication called CRASH, I laughed with amusement and contempt. That was before I saw the December issue. That is sick. Some of us do not go and see the mindless gore films on principle. We certainly don't wish to see our regular magazine featuring that sort of thing on its cover, and a still worse advert inside. My contempt for that no-quality company Domark increaseth.
Neithan, Chichester

Point taken. And ever onwards

Dear Lloyd,
I am so angry that I thought I just had to put biro to paper and write to you. I used to respect your mag a great deal until I got this month's (No 23, December). I was looking through it, thinking yes, gosh, ah, cool and other things to that effect until I got to page 41, where I stopped in horror. I am not thinking of the picture on the front, or the ad on page 39 or even of the preview of *Friday 13th* on pages 146 and 148.
I am thinking of the ad for the *Wham! Music Box.*
Even the appearance of that disgusting word *WHAM* made me realise that this was going to be gruesome. As I looked on, I saw a picture of the members George 'Weirdo' Michael and Andrew 'changed nose' Ridley. So gruesome. This really got me mad. I showed it to my friends and they totally agreed with me.
So come on, CRASH, don't be so disgusting and let's have more pokes instead of horrible pictures. I will give your mag one more go. But please don't do it again.
Yours disgustedly,
Someone who doesn't like WHAM, Little Sutton, Cheshire

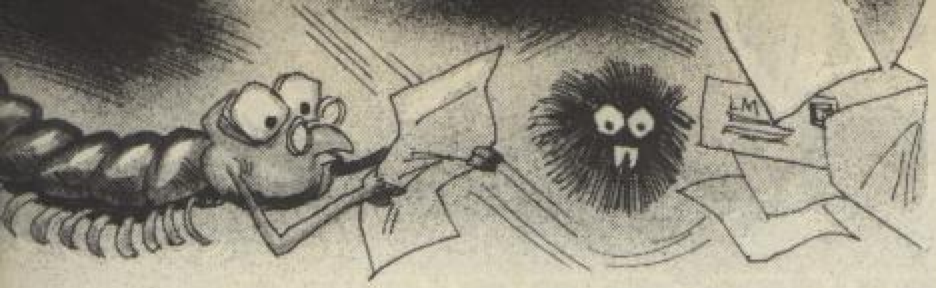
After The Osmonds and Perry Como, Wham are my favourite group. How can you possibly not like them? However, sorry to have so upset you! Readers complaining about unlucky days will now think this is a made up letter for light relief, but it is genuine — there are people who hate Wham, But back to the theme for the month,

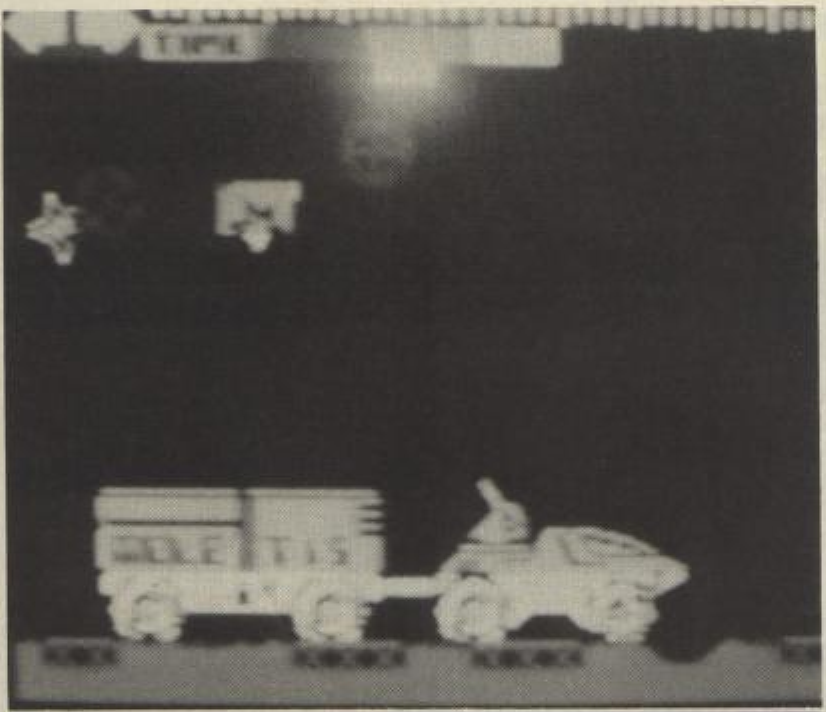
Sir,
Having read several of my kids' CRASH mags — and taken the scissors to several of the worst pages — this month's (December) front cover and related internal themes have sunk to a new low.
I'm getting fed up with the macabre and evil undertones in much of the contents and I will be forced to stop my son buying it if it doesn't improve, which will be a shame as it's good in general.
I hope 'earning a quick buck at any expense' isn't your only motivation, and that you have some (?) conscience about the harm you are doing to impressionable kids.
Isn't there enough horror in the world without you adding to it and glorifying it?
N Rolls, Berkhamsted, Herts

Quite why people immediately think 'making a quick buck' is the reason for including something with which the writer disagrees, has always puzzled me. No one ever seems to think that making 'a quick buck' is the reason for putting in something nice (?)!
But on we go ...

Dear Sir,
I am writing to complain about your Issue No 23. I pay for a standing order at the newsagents, but when my son turned up with your last issue I was horrified at the cover — it was frightening and horrible. My lad is only 10 and the pictures and editorial pictures were very explicit. I am amazed that a magazine aimed at pre and teen agers should feature such gruesome and frightening pictures.
I know people die in games all the time, but graphics are not as frightening or bloodthirsty. The film is 18 Cert and pictures from the film should be the same. I think it was very unthoughtful of you to put these pictures in such detail.
I personally have cancelled my order for your mag and have persuaded two others to do so. I have persuaded my newsagent to send copies of the magazine back to WH Smith.
I feel so strong about this that I have taken the offending pages out and put them up where I work (A NATIONAL NEWSPAPER) with notes saying this is what CRASH MAG is trying to push on your children.
I would be very interested in you trying to justify the publication of the stills, and await your reply.
C Hayes, Firswood, Manchester

Okay, I can't put it off any longer — it's REPLY time!
First, though, I must make it clear that the following are my personal opinions. Yes, the cover is pretty strong in content but, unlike the films on which the game is based, it is also very stylised. The game comes packaged with blood capsules — delightful little objects that can be bought in many shops around the country, underlining the fact that this is supposed to be fun. Whether the individual considers it to be so is obviously another matter. I do think Domark's publicity stills and the general promotion is over the top, but of course they are riding on the back of the films' promotion — and it's worth remembering that they have had a colossal audience. I don't seriously think that the Domark stills, or those from the film are anything like Cert X and the photo caption in CRASH was purposely designed to remove any sting from the picture anyway. Perhaps you don't agree.
It seems very common in this sort of argument to take the attitude that CRASH is aimed at 'pre-teens and early teenagers'. When the mag started, over two years ago, an advertising agency contacted Roger Kean asking for the intended reader profile and age group, so they could word their promotion to suit the magazine's type of reader. Roger is supposed to have said that he wasn't entirely sure what age group would be predominant. The agency was alarmed, replying that they couldn't do the press release properly unless they knew what age group to write for. Roger answered, 'We're writing for 25 year olds because younger people don't like being talked down to.'
Our own questionnaire established that the **average** *CRASH reader is well over 17, although the biggest single group is in the region of 14. In that sense we are aiming the magazine at the age group that most buys comics like 2000AD. In comparison to that, anything in CRASH is mild stuff.*
In conclusion, no one here is trying to foist anything on 'impressionable' youngsters. The very use of the word 'impressionable' is intended to be emotive, implying that the 'kids' are being got at. I am not very impressed with the game Friday the 13th, *but it was previewed in good faith as a bit of fun.*
LM





FOUND IT, NYA NYA

Dear Lloyd,
Many people have written to you claiming to have found the *Lunar Jetman* trailer, but you have always proved them wrong.

I decided that I would have a go at finding the trailer. Some of my friends offered to help me on my mammoth task so we loaded *Jetman* with infinite lives. A few days later after hours of alien blasting, we found it. We have taken a photograph as proof, which is enclosed. Maybe now you will believe the trailer exists.
Peter Featherstone, with help from Mark Connor, Martin Wilson, Chris Hubbard, and Andrew Edscer, Leeds

Gosh!
LM

LETTER FROM A DICTIONARY

To Lloyd Mangram
Howdy Lloyd! How's tricks?

Last week I resolved to mosey on down to the store to interchange some of the old legal tender for my pet publication of Spectrum festivities.

Upon arriving I proceeded to execute the aforementioned. (No, not 'kill', arthropod celebrium!)

When at my abode, burying myself in the folios, a few conclusions entered my cerebellum and medulla oblongata: excellent, first class, exquisite, high-grade, attractive, great, superior, exceptional, superb, capital, accomplished, incomparable, priceless, invaluable, magnificent, wonderful, skillful, praiseworthy, above par, first rate, terrific, amazing, neat, groovy, top hole and definitely up to the notch.
Steven Cantwell, Frinley Gren, Surrey
(Roughly translated, 'I bought CRASH and liked it'.)

Yes, and I can see you've got a pirate copy of my Long Word Dictionary too. For a moment there, I thought you were going to take us to task over how many synonyms there are for 'really excellent' in the reviewers' comments!
LM

PRAISE, INDEED

Dear Sir,
I am writing to express my complete satisfaction with the advertisement that has been placed by our company in CRASH magazine over the past few months. The response from this advertisement has been tremendous, abling us to build our micro computer section up even further.

I hope this letter will be published in your magazine so that other future advertisers will certainly consider CRASH magazine before any other.

Your advertisement rates must also be the most reasonable in this country anyway, and we find it is a pleasure to do business with you and you are certainly guaranteed our advertising for at least the next twelve months.

Many thanks and keep up the good work.
CK Durie, Service Manager, Walkers Computer Service and Repairs, Birmingham.

Thank you for the compliment! I suppose I should make this letter of the month! Well, perhaps not, people might start getting the idea I'm biased.
LM



Ask you local computer store for details on full range or phone us direct

ACCESS ACCEPTED

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USE EUROMAX JOYSTICKS

SUITABLE FOR ALL POPULAR MICROS
THE U.K.'S LEADING QUALITY BRAND.

Please send me further details of the Euromax Joystick range.

NAME..

ADDRESS..

....

....



A FEW KIND (AND NOT SO KIND) WORDS ABOUT ELITE

Several readers have had a few things to say about Firebird's Elite *game . . .*

LOCKED OUT

Dear CRASH,
In Issue 22 I read about a game called *Elite* from Firebird. So taking out my birthday money I rushed to the computer shop to get this game. I got home and loaded it. I read the instructions about Lenslok and tried to find the code — after three attempts the game just went off. So I loaded it again, and again trying to suss the code. You guessed it, the game just went off. I tried this for four hours.

So the next day I took the game back to the shop — and it took them three hours to get the code. The only snag is, the code changes each time you load up. I think this is the worst act to stop pirates due to the fact that it also stops non-pirates playing the game.

The Lenslok instructions were pathetic. They didn't give any idea how to use the stupid thing. They should have showed some sort of diagram, showing how to look through the lens I just hope all the software companies don't decide to use Lenslok because it is a complete farce.
C Ullah, Redditch, Worcs

All I can say about Lenslok is that we have had no trouble with it, most people finding it quite simple to set up the lens and read the code. Firebird, however, obviously agree with you on the instructions, as they have had them completely rewritten.

The next writer shares your views though.
LM

Dear Lloyd,
After all the waiting, after all the adverts, after all the previews, it's finally here! Yup, you got it, we're talking about *Elite*.

We've both bought a copy and are exceedingly impressed. On opening the box we noticed they are having a competition playoff for the best players. What form (we ask ourselves) can this take? Perhaps a series of Spectrums networked through an IBM so that you have to battle it out amongst each other until only one is left? No. Well then, what about giving each player an identically equipped ship and a time limit, the victor being the one with the most kills or the most money. No again. The answer came to us in a blinding flash of inspiration: The winner will be the one who can work out how to use . . . LENSLOK!

Perhaps it's just that our mega-sized brains can't handle something so trivial as a blob of red plastic. Maybe due to our advancing years (both of us are the wrong side of 23), we're just too muddled to cope. Could it be our reliance on another type of Lenslok, the sort you stick on your nose first thing in the morning (it's another sign of old age, being short-sighted). Honestly, neither of us can say with hand on heart that we can really see actual letters through the damned thing.

Apart from the quibbling we must say that *Elite* is the best game either of us have ever played. Lenslok is the most infuriating thing we have ever come across. (Next, maybe, to having to work late when the pubs are open!)
Messrs Reid and Wood, Hitchin, Herts

Well some turbo loaders just won't load, perhaps some Lensloks just won't unlok. I must admit that the times I've tried it has been on a CUB Monitor — maybe it doesn't look as easy on an ordinary TV screen
LM

THE ADAM LOCK BACKLASH

Dear Lloyd,
Having seen Adam Lock's letter in CRASH 23 I thought that I would write to you concerning the subject of so called 'computer' role-playing games. It may be said that *Elite* bears more than a passing resemblance to *Traveller*, not just meaning names taken from the book.

I have a friend who plays *Traveller* and he tells me that *Elite* is not exactly like it. For one thing, it is very difficult to get a ship in *Traveller* (unless you are very rich or lucky) and combat is not at all like the one in *Elite* which is more exciting (being arcade type). This is not to say *Traveller* is better than *Elite* or vice versa. They are both different games on their own, and not really comparable. This also goes for other computer games, such as *Fairlight* or *Knight Lore*.

Two major things at least are lacking from all but one of these computer arcade adventure role-playing games (to give a name). First is the ability to adventure in groups which is sadly missing. Second is the ability to actually role-play. That is, to develop a personality for your character in a long-running campaign.

These two points, I believe, are the most important, but there are others. I'm not saying these computer games are inferior — it's just that comparisons can't be made, as in the case of *Elite/Traveller*.

So now to the exception. This is the incredible new PSS game, *Swords and Sorcery*. This is (at last) a CAARPG (see above). If you like role-playing games then buy this. Anyway, please don't confuse role-playing games with computer games, the gap has only been bridged once — the rest are only on a par with Fighting Fantasy gamebooks.
James Pengelly. Cyncoed, Cardiff

The next writer doesn't quite seem to agree . . .
LM

RIGHT ON, ADAM

Dear Lloyd,
I must agree with Adam Lock's letter (Issue 23) about the similarities between *Elite* and *Traveller*. Details in the games are identical, even down to the space cadet's name (Jamison in *Traveller*, Jameson in *Elite*).

I feel that this fact actually enhances *Elite*, as players of *Traveller* have a background knowledge of the complex needs and risks of interplanetary trading. I've had *Elite* since it first hit the shelves, and can honestly say it's the best game I've ever played on the Spectrum.

As to the Lenslok security system, I've had no problems with it, and feel the only enemies it will make are with the software pirates, who may find themselves out of pocket if they want to play the game. My only small niggle is that the folding part of the lens is not as strong as it could be, and may break after continued use.

Thanks, anyway, to GDW for the brilliant concept and to Firebird for the computer game of a lifetime.
AD Cornwell, Gillingham, Kent

It's nice to see lots of people getting enjoyment from Elite *because it some respects, on the surface, it isn't a game one might expect to have massive popular appeal, but it certainly is a compelling one!*
LM

CHAUVINIST PORCINE WRITES

Dear LM,
This is just a quick note typed out on my trusty OLD Adler typewriter. I read with interest the letter from Mrs Rhonda Sherman in the December issue of CRASH and I must say that I can only agree. As a dyed in the wool male chauvinist porcine, I feel obliged to point out that software companies, being what they are, would probably find it difficult to produce games made exclusively for the ladies in the programming world.

Having said that, I can quite happily see something of that sort coming from St Brides in the near future. At any rate, I know of at least one non-sexist programmer by name — Sandy White (remember *Ant Attack*?)

I think that to single out women for special software is demeaning in the extreme but I do think we could all take a hint from the Chinese and drop the feminine/masculine gender from scenarios wherever possible.
Maurice Criddle, Bexley, Kent

Perhaps you're right about the gender thing, but I draw the line when I'm told a 'manual' is now referred to as a 'personual'. Does this make me a MCP?
— worried of Ludlow

IS IT A NERD? IS HE A PAIN? NO . . . IT'S SUPERDAD!

Dear Lloyd,
I would like to compliment a certain software company for helping unemployed Superheroes.

Take my Dad for instance (please). He used to fly around the States (of America, don't you know) saving people's lives and the like, but because of the bad publicity in the films and cartoons, ordinary minions think that superheroes save lives for nothing. Huh!

People like my Dad need this money for things like food and laddered tights, not to mention clean undies!

Software companies can produce as many games as they like, so long as they give me and my Dad a fiver for every ten games sold. As only an elite few of us know (Me and my Dad) the 'S' on my Dad's leotard is in fact a 5, standing for £5 — but when my Dad has saved a life or two and asks for a meager fiver the people just don't pay up and, being the nice gent he is, my Dad won't pressure them into paying. This is where you come in.

Please remind people that superheroes can't live on thank yous and send a quid or cheque payable to us, or any spare tights you might have, we will be very grateful.

I would hate to see the day when my Dad would want his five pounds in advance, before he saves someone. Could you imagine it?
David Adkinson, Sale, Cheshire

When you're needed people are all over you, David, but as soon as you're not they no longer care. Isn't that life?
LM



FROM THE HIP

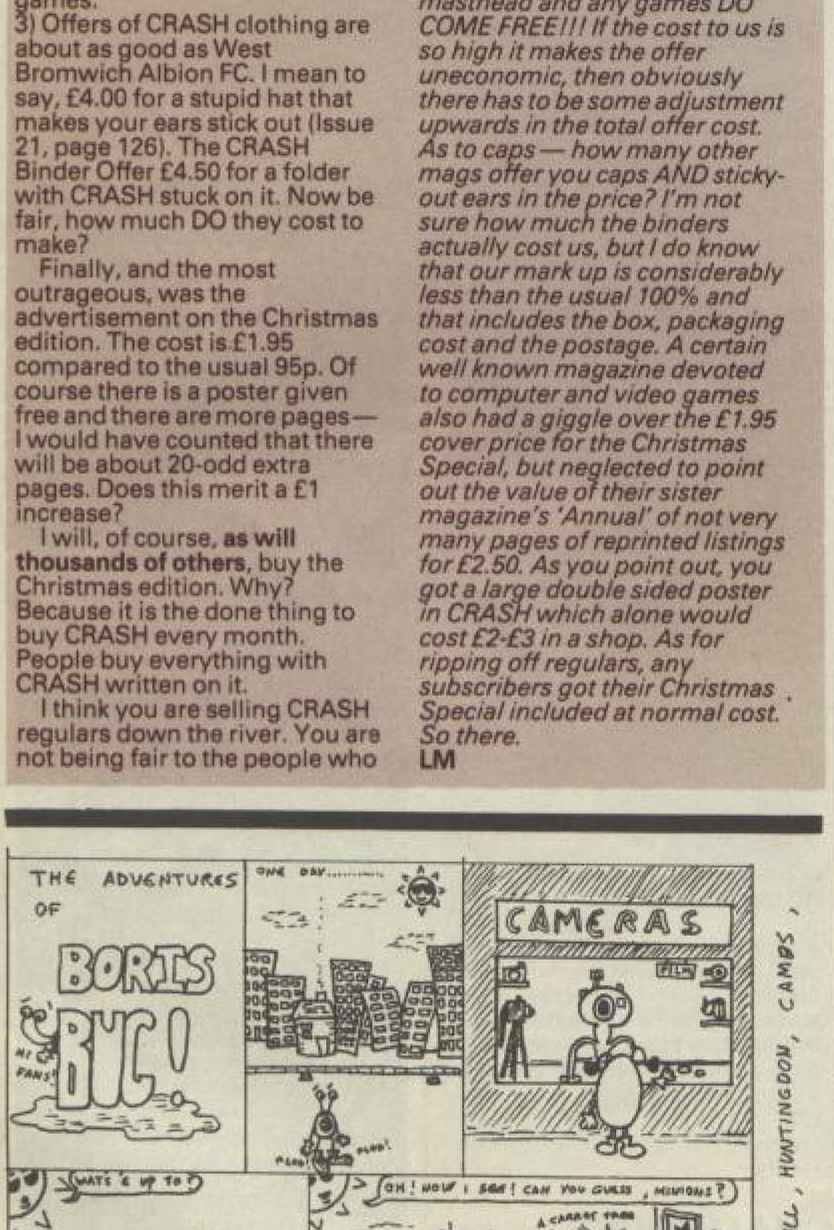
Dear Lloyd,
Issue 23 finally did it. It made me angry enough to spend time writing you. I'm fed up with people saying how good CRASH is when quite frankly, it could be much better:
1) CRASH Smashes should be given a full page. A game that gets 9 on the adventure scale deserves more than being split up over two pages (*Terrormolinos*)
2) Stop lying about subscription offers. They are NOT free. We have to pay £5.00 extra for old games.
3) Offers of CRASH clothing are about as good as West Bromwich Albion FC. I mean to say, £4.00 for a stupid hat that makes your ears stick out (Issue 21, page 126). The CRASH Binder Offer £4.50 for a folder with CRASH stuck on it. Now be fair, how much DO they cost to make?

Finally, and the most outrageous, was the advertisement on the Christmas edition. The cost is £1.95 compared to the usual 95p. Of course there is a poster given free and there are more pages— I would have counted that there will be about 20-odd extra pages. Does this merit a £1 increase?

I will, of course, **as will thousands of others**, buy the Christmas edition. Why? Because it is the done thing to buy CRASH every month. People buy everything with CRASH written on it.

I think you are selling CRASH regulars down the river. You are not being fair to the people who made you popular. So enough of this propaganda. Start getting your priorities right and your prices fair. People are starting to see through your schemes.
Yours angrily
Evan Gillespie, Kilwinning, Ayreshire

Come off it Evan, nearly every CRASH Smash gets two pages, but sometimes the space allowed for items doesn't work out that way. You make it sound like the thing is laid out in a few hours when actually it takes some two weeks. No one is lying about the subscription offers. The proper rate is given in the masthead and any games DO COME FREE!!! If the cost to us is so high it makes the offer uneconomic, then obviously there has to be some adjustment upwards in the total offer cost. As to caps — how many other mags offer you caps AND sticky-out ears in the price? I'm not sure how much the binders actually cost us, but I do know that our mark up is considerably less than the usual 100% and that includes the box, packaging cost and the postage. A certain well known magazine devoted to computer and video games also had a giggle over the £1.95 cover price for the Christmas Special, but neglected to point out the value of their sister magazine's 'Annual' of not very many pages of reprinted listings for £2.50. As you point out, you got a large double sided poster in CRASH which alone would cost £2-£3 in a shop. As for ripping off regulars, any subscribers got their Christmas Special included at normal cost. So there.
LM



A PROGRAMMER WRITES . . .

Dear Boiled,
Thanks for the review of *Brainstorm*. (No, this is not a letter bomb.) While I thought most of the review was quite fair, there are just one or two points I'd like to make. Firstly, there are no bugs in the sprite routine that I know of, and if I had ever noticed the effect that you claimed happened with your copy, I would certainly have done something about it. You don't think Bubble Bus would have let me get away with something like that, do you? There is definitely nothing wrong with the production copy they sent me.

Apart from the above, I agree with the comments made by the first two reviewers — the graphics are a little dated. But, mm . . . well was the third reviewer a moron? I mean, when did Bubble Bus do a copy of *Sabre Wulf*? He didn't mean *Wizard's Lair*, did he? And I can't really agree that the game is copy of *Jetpac* — the playing motion might be the same, but there are no other similarities are there? or do we have two different *Jetpacs*? It was more inspired by the early Fantasy games than anything else. Anyway, I won't bore you with my criticism about your criticism. I have one or two ideas that would improve your review even further:
1) Stop comparing Spectrum versions of a game to their Commodore equivalents. It may be alright for you to say 'this makes the Spectrum look ten times better than the C64', but I think you should compare a game to something Spectrum owners can relate to, not something they're never likely to see;
2) I think you should put reviewers' initials at the bottom of each piece of criticism they write. This would mean that readers can anticipate that a certain reviewer would, say, go over the top about any platform game, and so take his comments with a pinch of salt.
Tim Prosser, Saltash, Cornwall

You're right about comparing cross-machine versions of games, although you might be surprised just how many CRASH readers do see 64 games. But I do think it is interesting to reference Spectrum games with those on the Commodore and the Amstrad, where the reference is relevant. The argument about initialising the reviewers' comments is an old one. Long ago we adopted the policy (right or wrong) that the reviewers would remain anonymous, largely because they were and are mostly at school, and partly because there are so many of them that it would not have much point. The system used in ZZAP! 64 magazine is quite different where the reviews are tackled by in-house staff.
LM

RAH! RAH! SPORTS GAMES!

Dear Lloyd,
Please could you explain to me how software is chosen for reviewing.

I noticed, after a short look through Issue 23 that *Graham Gooch's Test Cricket* has not been reviewed, and I suppose will not be reviewed. Yet, in this issue, seven and a half pages were covered with reviews of eight budget titles. Only two of these (*One Man and his Droid* and *Chicken Chase*) justified the space, while the others averaged only 60%.

This magazine seems to be prejudiced against sports simulations; preferring to contain endless budget games and *Quill*ed adventures. Two important CRL releases, *Formula One* and *Endurance* have never graced your pages. Also, *Brian Jack's Superstars Challenge* and *Sports Hero* from Martech and Melbourne House never received the full treatment. Could this have anything to do with the fact that Chris Passey finds cricket 'yawn inducing' (Issue 16) and that one of the reviewers of *World Series Basketball* is 'not a sports simulation person'?

I think that a separate corner should be established in the mag for sports simulations, where games could be reviewed by one who knows about and likes this sort of software.
John Cowley, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham

A bit of an unfair criticism, seeing how many sports simulations we have reviewed in the past. Endurance Racing *was reviewed last month and* Graham Gooch's Test Cricket *is reviewed this issue — as soon as was possible.* Brian Jacks *and* Sports Hero *did rather miss out due to the fact that they arrived during Chris Passey's Sports Special and got included there — same for the CRL game. The tendency to look down on most sports simulations is simple — most of them have deserved no more. As you will see in this issue,* Graham Gooch's test Cricket *gets the full treatment and is well reviewed (in fact, breaking a CRASH confidence, Chris Passey's comment is the first one).*
LM



NO JOY FROM JOYSTICKS

Dear Lloyd,
I am writing this letter to complain about the lack of good joysticks at reasonable prices.

Eleven months ago I received a Protek joystick set for Christmas which included a Quickshot 1, Protek Interface and the game *Airliner*. Six months later the joystick fell to bits while I was playing *Blade Alley*. When people talk of cheap joysticks as good value, I think they are crazy. When you buy the set, just because it is cheap, you still should expect the contents to be of an acceptable standard and not rubbish. The set itself cost £19.99 which is very good value, considering the separate price would be about £30.

I have a friend who has a Gunshot 1, which after only three months is ready to go to the dustbin. These joysticks could be faulty, but many of my other friends have had the same complaint. There is no point in selling a joystick for £10 if it will fall to bits shortly after you buy it. £10 is a lot of money, and could be spent on something of more use.

I would lir Studies teacher, Mr Fanning. Anyway, I lent him my copy of *The Quill* last year. Well now he has just released *The Duncan Bowen Adventure* which he is selling for £4.99 at the local computer shop. But he wouldn't even give me a free copy of the game. The game he used my *Quill* to write.

Well, now I've got my *Quill* back I'm starting to write my own adventure game. I will call it *The Crash Towers Adventure* and I will send you a copy FREE OF CHARGE (if you print my letter).

By the way, tell Robin Candy that his POKE for *Raid Over Moscow* (November Issue) doesn't work, and that he should try out the POKES before he prints them. Also, he needs a haircut.

Michael Freund, Ashford, Kent

Robin had a haircut many moons ago, in fact before the PCW show (he's had others since) and no longer looks anything like his Playing Tips photo — in fact he looks more like a pop group now — Wham perhaps? And all the POKES are tested before printing. Occasionally there are typesetting errors that cause the problem, but most letter and phone call complaints turn out to be operator error in entering the data. I look forward to your Quilled adventure, but perhaps you should send a copy of your teacher's along so Derek Brewster can review it!??
LM

PEN PAL CORNER

Here are a few pen pal type letters. The first is asking for back copies of CRASH and seems to be offering quite a bit for them! I print this letter and those following on the understanding that anyone who enters into correspondence with the writer, or any form of contractual agreement, does so at their own risk!
LM

Dear Sir,
I would be very pleased if you would publish the following, to help me a bit!

It had to happen. I got CRASH fever. I bought all the back issues still available, but some numbers are still missing from my collection. I need Issues 1, 2, 7, 11, 12, 13, and 14. Is there anybody able to sell them to me and survive? I'm offering 5.00 for each issue in good condition. Please write to:
Paulo Cambraia, Est Benfica 523-4C, 1500 LISBOA, PORTUGAL

Dear anyone out there who love Tips and Maps,
Would you like any of these things? If so, please send a SAE to **Mark Cairns, Glenfield House, 246 Comber Road, Lisburn, Co Antrim, BT27 6XZ** and you will not be disappointed with our MAPS, TIPS and POKES pack. You will be sure of a reply, and also (I nearly forgot to tell you) the Pack is FREE!
Mark Cairns and David Topping

Dear CRASH
We are three young megaenthusiastic boys from old Denmark. Here in Denmark all computer freaks get ripped off by the software dealers who take hyperenormous prices.

But then we got the Ultrahypersmart idea of selling software at extremely low prices (after Danish conditions) but we've got one great problem. Our business contacts in the UK are cheap, but utterly slow. We send an SOS to all software dealers: Please send us information about Prices, Delivery and so on.
Ultrasave (Sell the Game), Grydergrade 9, 6300 Warde, DENMARK

Dear Crash
I'm 17 years old and an overseas CRASH reader. I own a 48K Spectrum and would like to correspond with any CRASH readers in Britain or from other countries, to exchange ideas, tips etc.

Boys or girls, of any age, if interested, please write to me at the address below:
Albert Foo, 770 Happy Garden, Old Kuchai Road, 58200 Kuala Lumpur, M like to hear from anyone with views on the Domark/Friday 13th business, either for or against those views already printed in this issue — perhaps Domark would as well, but I suspect that they are an unrepentant bunch of funsters!

If you have anything to say on almost any subject in the universe as long as it relates to Spectrum games (which includes almost everything possible), then write to me, LLOYD MANGRAM, CRASH FORUM, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB. Sadly, it is virtually impossible for me to reply personally, so please don't send in SAEs for replies — you'll just be disappointed. I'm so busy you see, I have to clean the keys of my typewriter after every hammering session. However, I'm pleased to announce that the management have seen fit to give me an upgrade — I'm now on a 1938 Hermes machine, and wow, is it flash!

FROM FINDING KITCHEN
CEILIN
CR

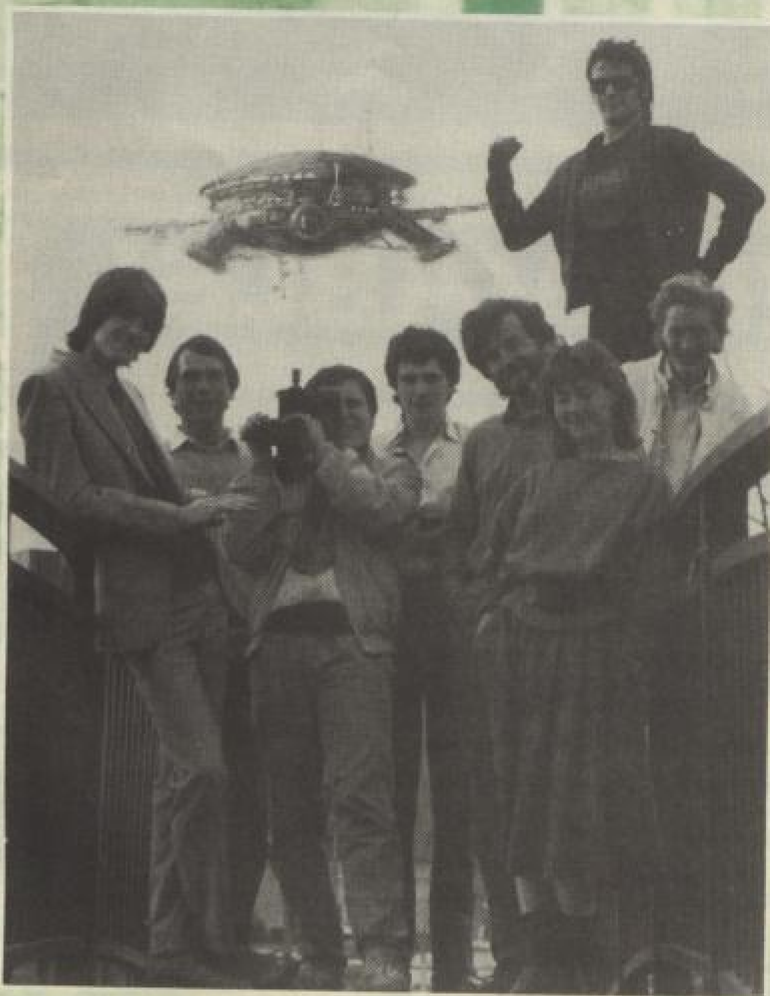
A So

Tau

Maybe it has something to do with the zoologist, but for some reason, people (including us!) find it a little difficult to spell **Durell**'s name correctly. More than once it has appeared as 'Durrel' or 'Durrell'. Durrel it is, pronounced dew-rel.

Now that the nomenclature is sorted out, it's time to turn attention to the people behind the name.

While he was training to be an Art Teacher, Robert White had no idea that he was going to end up as a software house boss. Once he'd completed his Art training, however, he soon realised that he was unlikely to go very far as an Art Teacher — there wasn't that much demand. Robert then decided that a career in Quantity Surveying might put an end to his joblessness. So he went back to



The Durell team gathered together, photographing us photographing them. Little did they know, someone else was photographing all of us . . .

UNITS ON THE G TO WRITING ASH SMASHES

ftware Success Story from nton, Somerset

DURELL Software Limited began life in February 1983, when Robert White plonked a 48K Oric and an Epson printer on a desk in Taunton and began writing home computer software. While the Oric has not proved to be a runaway success story, Durell hasn't done too badly over the past years. Nearly a quarter of a million copies of one of their earlier games, HARRIER ATTACK, are nestling in software collections around the world, for instance. (Not all Spectrum versions, mind.)

When their last two games for the Spectrum, CRITICAL MASS and SABOTEUR were both awarded CRASH Smashes, it was time to nip down to Taunton and find out who these Durell fellows are . . .

college, and after a couple of years hard slog, left with a first class degree in Quantity Surveying. During the course, he was introduced to computers, used for modelling. When he finished his studies Robert rather cheekily applied for a job with Oxford Regional Health Authority. They were using a computer-based building design system to create a model of Milton Keynes District General Hospital and Robert's mixture of skills in art, computer modelling and quantity surveying secured him the job.

"The model of the hospital was a fully accurate three dimensional representation of the building, right down to the very last doorknob and window catch", Robert explained. "The whole hospital was being designed on computer — as you can imagine, it was a massive undertaking."

The first task allocated to the 'new boy' on the team was to find some kitchen workunits in the model! For some reason, when the list of kitchen units needed for the real building was output from the computer, there turned out to be exactly twice as many as the architect KNEW were needed. Robert had to hunt through all the kitchens, looking for the extra units: "It took me quite a while to make the conceptual jump needed to find them", he remembers, "in the end, they turned out to be on the ceilings! Evidently another architect had entered the units into the model, but had been on the ceiling of the kitchens rather than the floors. Then someone else had come along later, noticed there weren't any kitchen units on the floors of the appropriate rooms and entered them into the model again."

Quite a jump from kitchen units in Milton Keynes Hospital to home computer software, but jump Mr White did after a while. "I was bored", he explained, "I really didn't want to carry on being someone else's employee and saw there was an opportunity to set up a business of my own producing computer software. So I made the break . . . "

Durell didn't start off as a mega-buck company. "I began with an Oric and an Epson printer — and the printer was an investment I thought long and hard about", Robert explained. Robert and his wife, Veronica, moved from Oxfordshire to a house near Taunton which his mother-in-law owned — so in the early days of Durell there wasn't a mortgage to worry about. Veronica continued working as a drama teacher while Robert sat down to write an Assembler on his new Oric. Plan A was to finish the Assembler, market it as a utility and then use it to write *Harrier Attack*.

Robert realised that he really needed four or five versions of the game — the home computer market in 1983 had not settled down as much as it has today. He advertised locally for programmers and Mike Richardson and Ron Jeffs joined the fledgeling company. With *Harrier Attack* (which attracted a bit of flak for its scenario — it was the time of the Falklands War), Durell moved to the present premises: a long attic room in an old building facing onto Taunton's Castle Square.

Mike Richardson had half-completed a game on his Spectrum when he answered Robert's advertisement. Having left school early, with nary a paper qualification to his name, Mike studied chemistry at night school and on day release schemes, collecting an HNC in computer studies on the way to his MSc in Chemistry. Working as a chemist in an aerosol factory, Mike bought himself a Spectrum and played around with it in his spare time.

Robert hired Mike as a freelance programmer as soon as he saw the half finished game. And insisted Mike should complete it. Released at £5.50, Mike's first game, *Jungle Trouble*, secured the Game of the Month slot in the Living Guide contained in Issue One of CRASH. Mike also wrote *Harrier Attack*.

Taking a break from his Spectrum, Mike wrote *Harrier Attack* for the Amstrad — a couple of weeks work. Then it was back to the Spectrum for six months, writing *Scuba Dive*, a game with an underwater scenario which puts you in control of a diver, searching for pearls on the sea bed. At the time *Scuba Dive* won particular acclaim for its graphics. In those days, the CRASH Smash hadn't been invented — otherwise *Scuba Dive*'s 92% overall rating would have made it one of the first Smashes.

Combat Lynx was Mike's next project, which was released on the Spectrum in the Autumn of 1983. The CRASH Smash HAD been invented, but sadly, Mike missed the mark by a couple of percentage points. It's still ranks high amongst Cockpit games, even after twelve months and the advent of several more high-quality flying games. Eight months work this time . . . "Each successive program is taking longer to write", Mike admits ruefully, "I suppose it's getting more difficult to keep up with advances in the quality of games."

Writing on a CPM machine running the Microsoft Assembler/Editor and downloading code to the Spectrum through a parallel interface, Mike is currently working on a driving game with a difference - *Turbo Esprit*. In the game you take the wheel of a Lotus Turbo Esprit, driving through a scrolling cityscape in pursuit of drug runners. You take on the role of a Special Agent and you're up against a gang of criminals who have stashed their heroin at a number of safe houses. Now, members of the gang are ferrying consignments of drugs to an armoured van which is driving through the streets. If you were to raid one of the houses the alarm would go up and you'd miss the rest of the haul. ▶



A trio of programmers — the Spectrum Specialists from Durell, including Mike Richardson, Clive Townsend, Simon Francis, Mike Richardson, Simon Francis, Mike, Simon, Clive Townsend (CUT! — Ed)

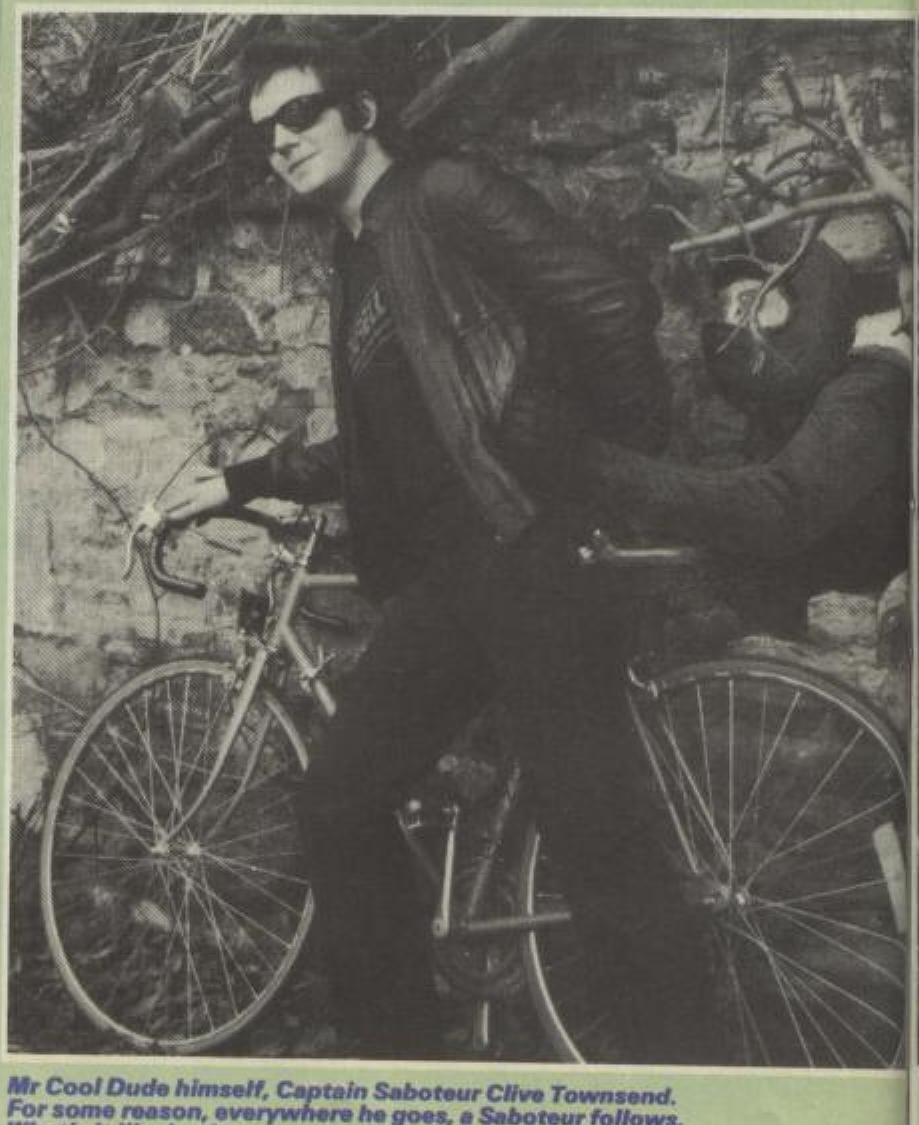
Similarly, if you attacked the armoured van, the gang would scarper with the remaining heroin. The only course of action open to you is to find the cars and intercept them on the way to the drop.
Zooming through the streets (some of which are one-way) you have to find the gangster cars, circle round the block and shoot them up. All the time there are other road users and pedestrians to cope with, traffic lights, junctions and the odd petrol station to call in on and refuel the car. You can view the action through the windscreen of your Esprit or flip to an aerial map of the city streets to plan your route. You'll have to be careful, though. Turbo Esprits are expensive and your bosses have only given you three to play with — crash 'em all, and you're out of the game.
Looking at an early version of the game in Durell's offices in the first week of December it was clear why Mike is taking longer to write it. The level of detail in the landscape and the way in which the traffic and pedestrians all go about their business should make the finished product quite a stunner. Maybe Mike Richardson will get that elusive Smash this year . . . .

Simon Francis, the author of *Critical Mass* is one of the more recent Durell finds. He first got interested in computers while he was at Middle school, when he messed around with a ZX81 owned by one of the Lab Technicians. At High School he learnt BASIC on a Pet and managed to persuade his father to buy him a Dragon 32. Simon's interest in programming led him to write his own game. Being a bit short of cash (his pocket money couldn't stretch to a programming book or an Assembler), Simon examined a machine code magazine listing, typed it in and fiddled around with the routines and got a basic understanding of how the code worked. Not the easiest way to learn Machine Code!
Using a scrolling routine he developed, Simon then wrote a *Frogger* type game on his Dragon, mainly in BASIC. He decided to see if he could make a few bob and placed a couple of classified ads in the back of computer magazines, offering his game for sale. While the loot didn't exactly flood in, he made enough profit to be able to buy a book on machine code.
After a bit of studying Simon borrowed an Assembler and wrote *Pit Fiend* — which was marketed by Microdeal on their pocket money label. "The only clever thing about *Pit Fiend* in my opinion was the fact that I managed to get four voices on the Dragon", Simon said. "Otherwise it was a run-of-the-mill game really. Still it got me started as a commercial programmer, and I decided to approach Audiogenic in the hope of getting a job, perhaps doing conversions."
"I'd shown Robert *Pit Fiend*, but he wasn't interested in Dragon software. Then Robert offered me freelance work — I was at college doing A Levels at the time. I was given an Amstrad to play with, and came up with a *Galaxians* variant once I'd got the rudiments of Z80 code." A couple of games on the Amstrad followed, and were marketed by Amsoft. Then, at the start of 1985 Simon was tempted away from college by a full-time job with Durell and work began on *Critical Mass*.
"I'm not entirely satisfied with *Critical Mass*", Simon explained, "not with the actual program code, it's just that the background's a bit empty — the scrolling meant I couldn't have as many fast-moving graphics as I would have liked." Not bad for a first Spectrum game, though . . .
Currently, Simon is not sure what his next game is going to be. "I've got three ideas at the moment, which I'm thinking about. Soon I'll have to persuade Robert that one of them warrants a game and then get on and program it" he said. And no, we're not going to print those three ideas here. Be a bit daft, wouldn't it?



Simon Francis, Creator of CRITICAL MASS really loves his car. Just because you're a programmer doesn't mean you have to buy a Porsche for trips down to the supermarket. But where on earth did that Sandworm thingy come from? Did it escape from the Durell Stock cupboard?

Mr Saboteur, Clive Townsend has been a dedicated follower of Sinclair since ZX81 days, when he wrote a Tarot Card program on the little beast. As soon as the Spectrum came out, Clive put his name down for one and quickly got to grips with the BASIC side of programming. "I wrote a couple of games — one ran rather slowly because it was all in BASIC and the other was much quicker, because I used a compiler . . . I took them both to Robert, and he like the slow one because of the graphics and the fast one on account of its speed."
The summer holidays followed, and Clive hung around the Durell offices learning machine code, making tea and wearing his cool-dude sunglasses. In May this year Durell decided to take him on full time, and he was set the task of writing a game called *Death Pit* on the Spectrum — mainly so he could learn how to apply the machine code he'd learnt. *Death Pit* has never been released — although half way through the project there was a moment when it looked like the game might make a commercial release, it didn't come up to scratch.
Saboteur came together slowly, and almost by accident. "I was doing graphics for other people on the Spectrum between sessions in *Death Pit* and I was playing around at home with some graphics of my own. I'm interested in Karate, and designed a Ninja who just ran around in a building on a scrolling screen. I showed what I had done to Robert in the office one day, and he liked the idea — only he wanted the screen to flip rather than scroll.
Basically, *Saboteur* rose from the ashes of *Death Pit* which was


Mr Cool Dude himself, Captain Saboteur Clive Townsend. For some reason, everywhere he goes, a Saboteur follows. What's it like having your very own mobile Fan Club Clive?

cannibalised for the routines it contained. Thanks go to a couple of Clive's mates: Rich, and Mat the Fat. They playtested the game all the way through while it was being written, and Clive did promise he'd give them a credit. So now he has.
No-one at Durell bothers too much with storyboards. Game ideas are bounced around the office, with everyone chipping in ideas and suggestions until the basic idea becomes a fairly detailed plan. Then it's a matter of convincing Robert, the Big Cheese, that the idea is worth turning into a game. Stephen Parker, Durell's marketing consultant also plays a part: "Steve advises me what he feels the market wants. Generally, as a result of Steve's work, I think the more High-Tech scenarios involving vehicles and futuristic equipment are what people want" Robert mentioned.
Conversions are done in house. Nick Wilson was responsible for the BBC version of *Combat Lynx* and *Mineshaft* and is currently embroiled in the Amstrad version of *Turbo Esprit* Ron Jeffs, who joined the company in its early days with Mike Richardson, began with the Oric, writing *Harrier Attack* and *Scuba Dive* and is currently converting *Critical Mass* for the Commodore. And Dave Cummings shouldn't be left out of the namecheck — he's the guy who replaced Clive on the graphics front. Watch out for him — he'll be writing games soon, no doubt . . .
But games isn't what Durell is **all** about. There's a thriving Business Software section, where Phil Dierks and Mike Evis are currently working on an accounting package. Every now and again the games programmers lend a hand — writing the odd routine or whatever, more by way of taking a break. Robert White feels that the business software market represents an area of stability to back up the volatile games market. A game tends to have quite a short life nowadays whereas good business software can sell and sell (and sell). There's little danger of the more 'serious' programs taking over, however.
There's very much a team atmosphere on the Castle Green in Taunton. When it comes to writing tricky routines, playing with the video camera or trying to blow up beachballs (literally — the ruins of one freebie plastic beachball over inflated by a robust pair of programmer's lungs lay in a tattered mess on one desk), everyone joins in together, offering advice and help. A fun place to work, obviously. And the overall company philosophy is a good one. "Every game we do should really be an improvement for each programmer" Robert said, when pressed to come up with a snappy one-line description of the way of working at Durell. It's plain the company is keen to train its programmers, and develop their skills. That approach to software development (and programmer development) obviously works●





Your chance to win a VCR in the Durell Saboteur mapping competition

Crash Competition

It's easy if you know how. I mean, Supercool Clive (he of the the shades) has got a smashing map of *Saboteur* which he produced specially for us at CRASH Towers. (Aaah! Isn't he sweet?).
But then if you're a programmer, mapping your own game isn't too difficult when it comes down to it. A bit tricky, maybe. Time consuming perhaps, but relatively straightforward.
So we have an official *Saboteur* map hidden away in a special Map Cupboard in Ludlow. For a bit of fun, Robert White thought it would be nice to get you lot out the prizelet on the entry form which should accompany your map as well as your name, address and T Shirt size.
We'll print an official *Saboteur* map in the March issue (cunning eh, closing the competition before we print the map. How do we think of these things?) so look out for it.
And remember, if you want your map returning, make sure you enclose the return postage. The tea kitty will be totally bare by the end of February — it's bound to take a real pasting over the Festive season as Lloyd always has two sugars in his tea at Chrissymass. It's his way of celebrating.

ENTRY FORM — TO BE STAPLED FIRMLY TO YOUR MAP

(You can copy out the details and write on the back of the map if you like, or use a photocopy if writing's not your strong point and you don't want to cut up the mag.)

MY NAME IS . . . .

MY T SHIRT SIZE IS . . . .

I WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING GAME IF I RUN UP . . . .

. . . .

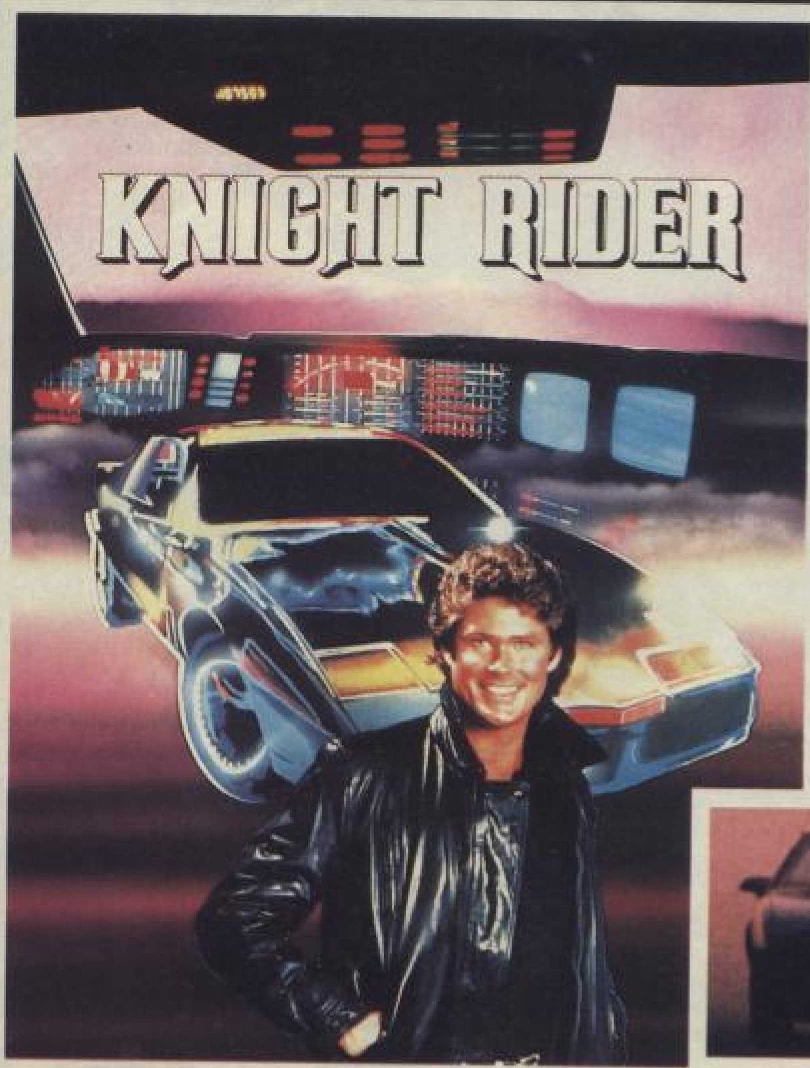
I LIVE AT . . . .

. . . .

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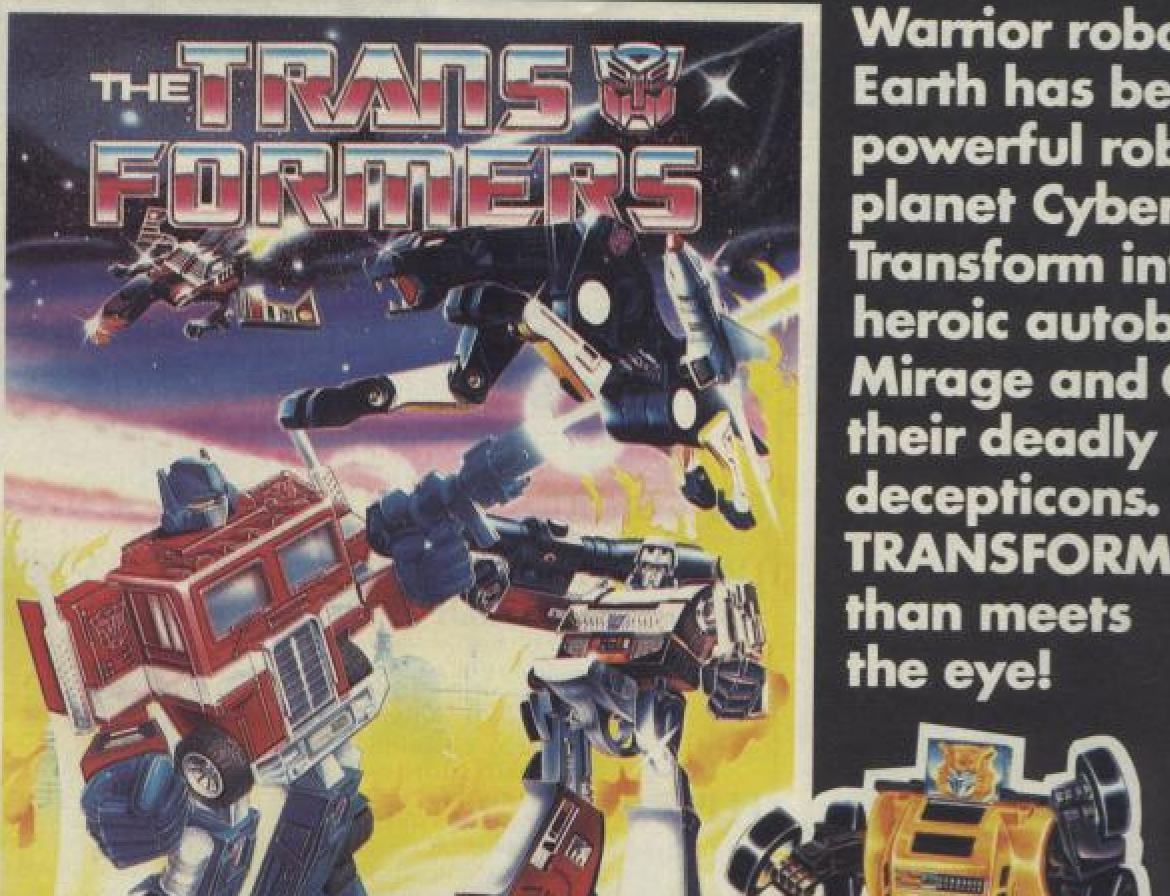
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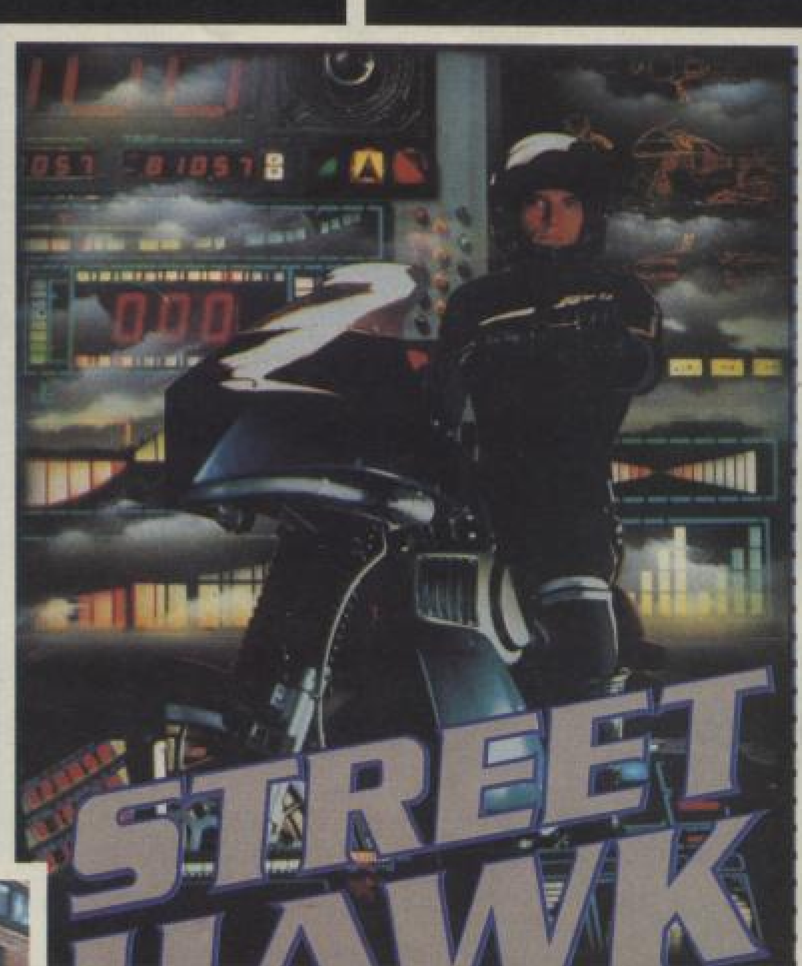
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EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE: THE STATE OF PLAY

Welcome to the first CRASH Course of 1986. This is an appropriate time for looking back over the events of the old year as well as making wishes for the new. 1985 saw a tremendous upsurge in the number of commercially available educational programs, particularly for use with younger children. Most educational publishers have now linked software with their own reading schemes (for instance, the Sinclair/MacMillan programs reviewed below), and, of course, this is the ideal way forward.

It is also good to see that some software houses are including audio tapes in their packages, and I hope this is a development we'll see more of in 1986. Older children, however, especially the 12 plus age group, are still not being particularly well catered for, and what is needed is for secondary teachers and publishers to get together to design programs with a high degree of educational relevance. Unfortunately, the industrial action by teachers throughout Britain in 1985 has done much to bring to a halt the development of new ideas in computer-based learning. Let's hope that 1986 will see more creativity in software and a move away from the kinds of application which tend to trivialise the potential of both the computer and the child.

Another hope for 1986 regards the increased availability of educational software in the high street stores. With the creation of the British Educational Software Associates at the end of last year, it is to be hoped that their aim of improving software distribution both to the home and school market will be realised, and that the service I mentioned in last issue will be extended during this year.

The past few years have been a period of experimentation in the field of computer-assisted learning. Now is the time for us to expand upon the good ideas that have emerged, with a view to providing a much better range of educational software in the future.

ANCIENT QUESTS

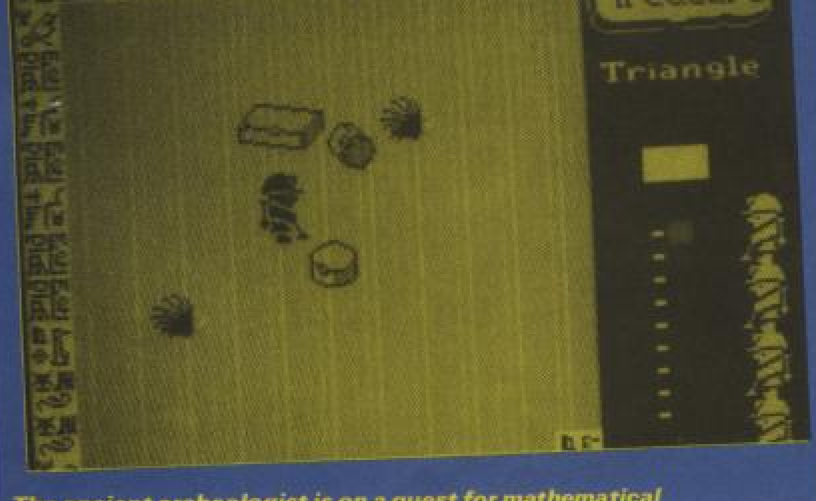
Producer: Mirrorsoft
Retail price: **£7.97**
Age range: **5—11**
Author: **Soft Option**

Ancient Quests contains two programs, *King Tut's Treasure* and *The Count*, both designed to give maths practice and skill reinforcement over a wide ability range. After *King Tut's Treasure* has loaded, the menu offers five choices ranging from shape matching to matching fractions with their decimal equivalent. The player is then offered a choice of easy or hard options, speed and number of hazards. The final option gives a choice of Kempston/Sinclair joystick control, or keyboard control. The aim of the game is to move the archeologist, Professor Diggins, and his metal detector around the screens to find buried objects (shapes, fractions and so on) which then enable him to open the door and reveal the hidden treasure. In *The Count*, the player has to search Dracula's Castle before destroying the Count himself. This time, the educational options cover counting, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

An immense amount of thought has obviously gone into *Ancient Quests*, and the range of options provided is quite impressive. Both games are enjoyable for children to play, but I'm afraid what they offer in terms of educational content is very limited.

COMMENTS

Control Keys: number keys, or joystick option
Keyboard play: very responsive
Use of colour: very good
Graphics: very nice indeed
General rating: enjoyable to play, and good value for money, but limited in terms of educational value



The ancient archeologist is on a quest for mathematical treasures in the second game in Mirrorsoft's ANCIENT QUESTS learning package.

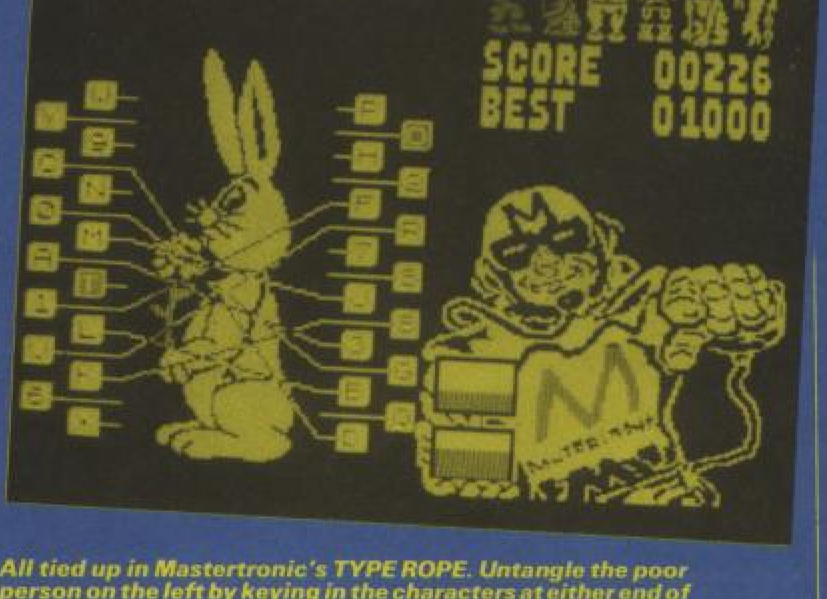
TYPE-ROPE

Producer: Mastertronic
Retail price: **£1.99**
Age range: **Younger children**

The aim of this game is to use the keyboard to untie the various characters by matching the correct letters and numbers. The quicker your reactions, the more points you get. On the left hand side of the screen, you see the character tied up with lengths of rope, one end of each piece labelled with a letter, the other with a number. By pairing the correct letter and number, the player frees the character.

The cover blurb tells us that "this ingenious program has been carefully designed for younger children and apart from providing them with endless hours of fun, it will help them with many aspects of their education."

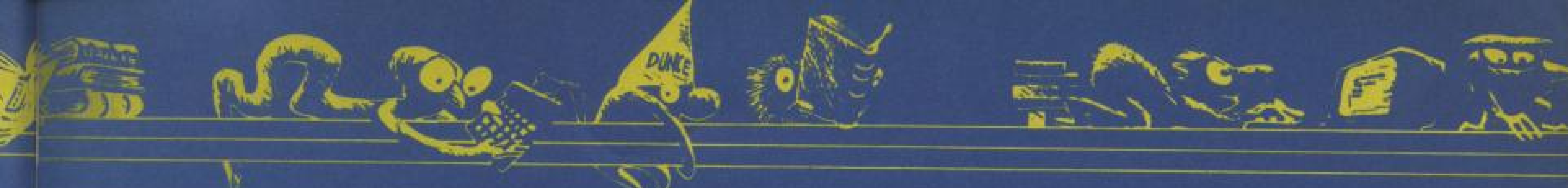
I'm afraid I fail to see the educational value of this game. It may have a use in teaching the layout of the QWERTY keyboard, but there are other games which do this better. Marketing programs like this under an educational banner is a bit dubious.

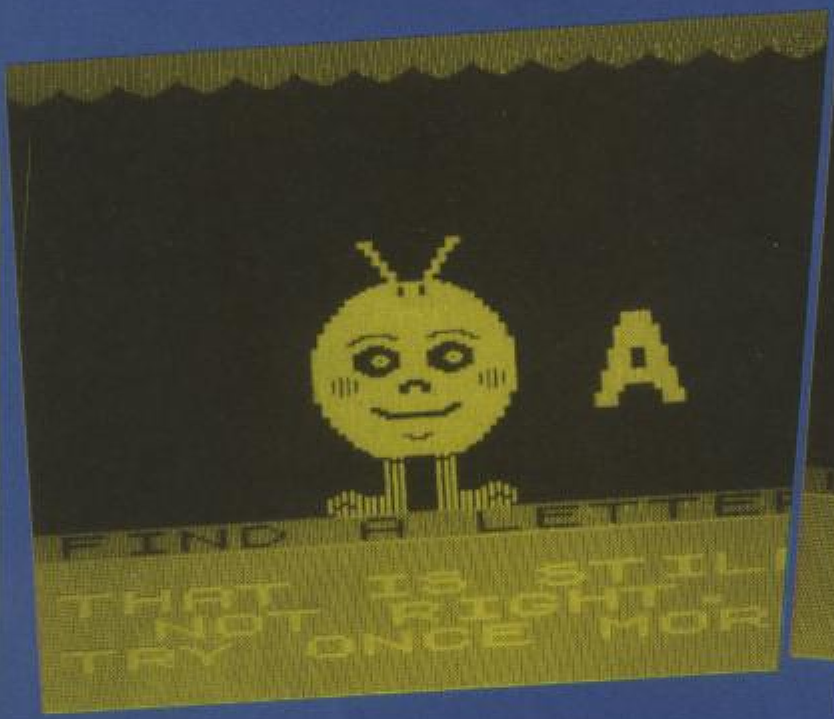


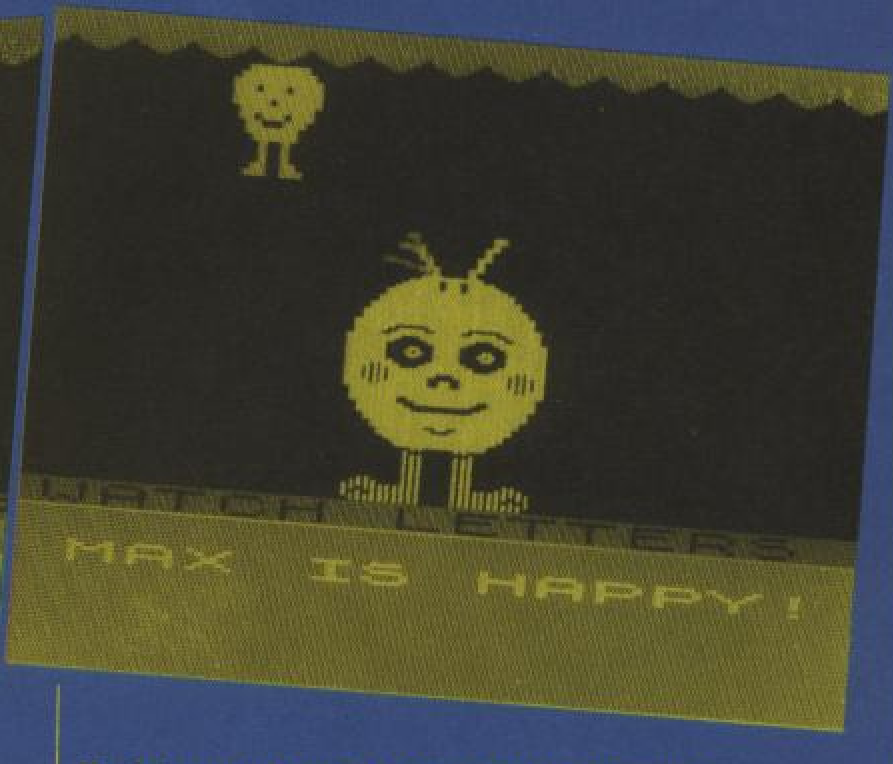
All tied up in Mastertronic's TYPE ROPE. Untangle the poor person on the left by keying in the characters at either end of the ropes.

COMMENTS

Control keys: whole keyboard
Keyboard play: **good**
Use of colour: **fair**
Graphics: **very limited and dull**
General rating: **give it a miss**







The rotund Max stands next to the letter A and waits for the correct key to be pressed in Beyond's ROMPER ROOM. There's still time to have another go, though . . .

Max is happy, in Beyond's ROMPER ROOM. Someone's evidently pressed the right key!

ROMPER ROOM

Producer: Beyond
Retail price: **£9.95**
Age Range; **2 — 7 (and parents too, it is claimed!)**

Romper Room represents Beyond's first shot at software for the pre-school child, and the cassette, like many in the future, I'm sure, contains versions for both the Spectrum and the Commodore 64. The press release tells us that "the whole game is interactive and fondly reminiscent of the old favourites Watch With Mother and Playschool, with the child encouraged to interact with the screen, keyboard and supervising parent".

The four games on the tape are all centered round the same basic idea, and represent four levels of difficulty. In the first game, *Watch the Letters*, the character Max introduces each letter of the alphabet in turn (each is displayed in both upper and lower case), shows where the letter is situated on the keyboard, gives a sentence using a word beginning with the letter displayed, and acts the word out on stage. All the child is asked to do at this level is to watch, while the parent can join in by reading out the letters and sentences. As there is no way of breaking out of the game, however, it becomes extremely boring for a young child to watch all twenty-six letters at one sitting. The games does not allow the parent to select specific letters for the child to practise, which is unfortunate.

At level 2, the child has to participate by choosing a letter to press in order to get Max to perform the action — for instance, if D is pressed, Max does a dance. I was interested to find out the sentence for X and Z — "You can see by the X-ray that Max has no bones", and "Max gets Zapped, but he always comes back".

In *Find the Letter*, the player has to press the key which corresponds to the letter being shown on the screen, and in *Letter Quiz* all the skills covered in the previous games are brought together and reinforced. Overall, this is quite a well-structured package, with each game leading directly from the previous one in terms of the skills encountered.

COMMENTS

Control keys: press the appropriate letter key to match the letter on the screen
Keyboard play: **good**
Use of colour: **bright and attractive**
Graphics: **good**
General rating: **a useful package which would have been greatly improved if there had been the option for the adult to select specific letters for practice.**

LEARN TO READ 1 — 5

Producer: Sinclair/ MacMillan
Retail price: **£7.95 each**
Age range: **Younger children**
Author: **Fisher-Marriott**

The five programs in this series are derived from MacMillan Education's best-selling reading scheme, Gay Way, which is widely used in primary schools. Educational consultants for the programs were Betty Root and



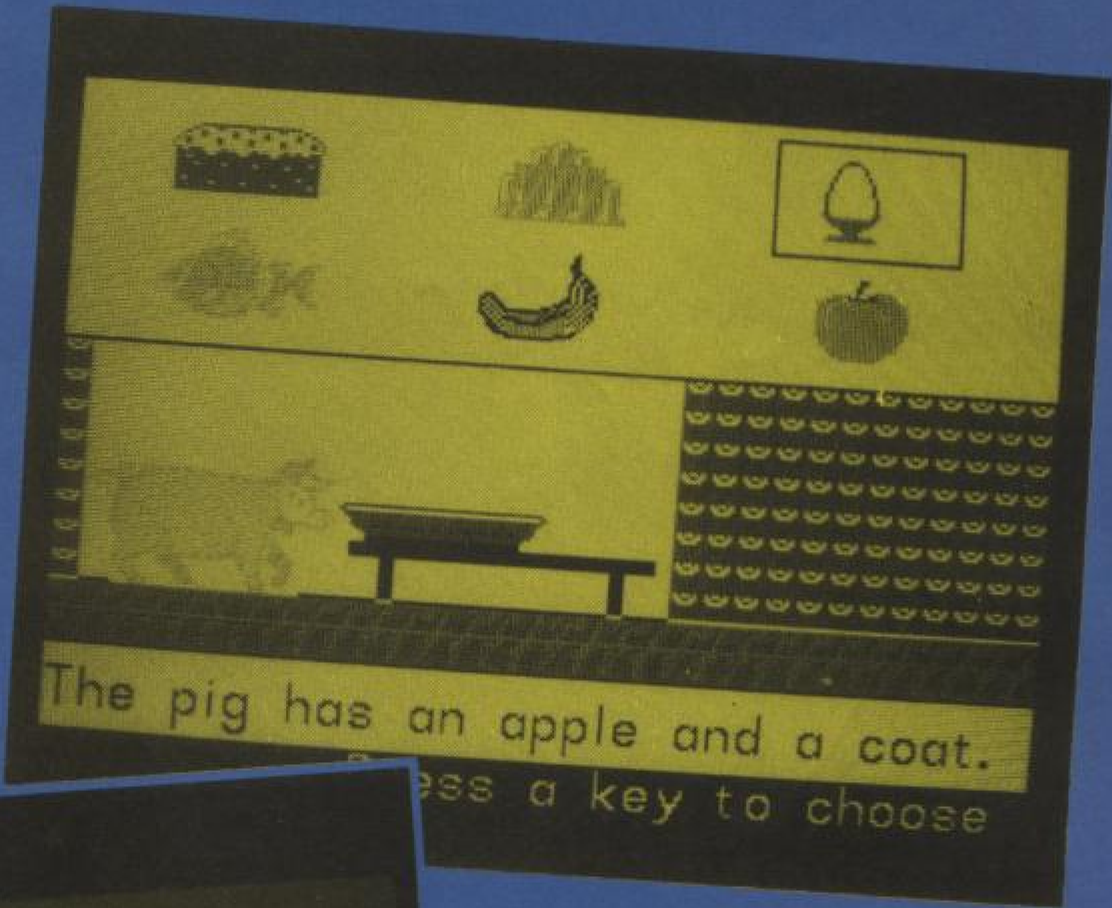




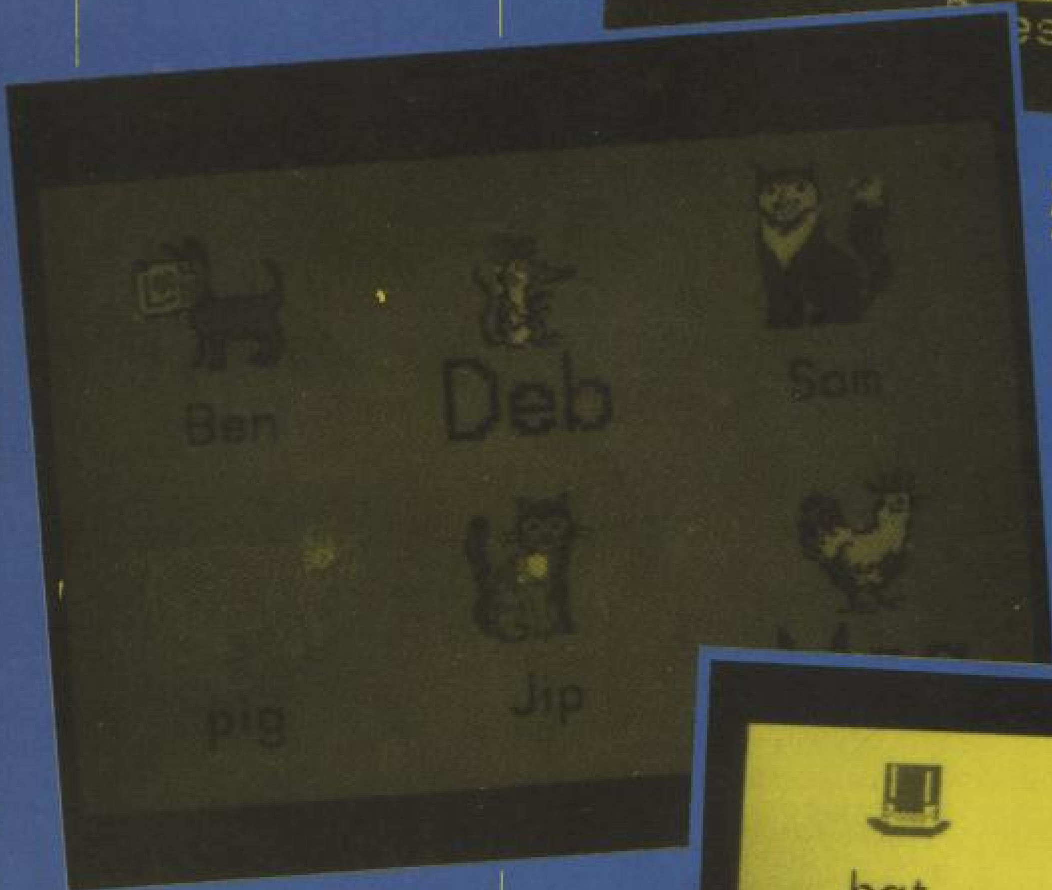
Diana Bentley, of the Centre for the Teaching of Reading at the University of Reading. The programs form a carefully structured sequence, beginning with letter recognition and sight vocabulary, and building up to the concept of positional language (words such as under, on, inside) in Program Five.

The excellent booklet which comes with each package has a lot of useful, practical advice to offer parents who want to help their children to read, and the contents of the various programs are clearly described.

When playing the games, it is possible to return to the menu at any time when the prompt 'Press A Key' is displayed on the screen, but a major snag with all the programs in the series is that a child inadvertently pressing BREAK on the Spectrum will crash the program altogether. The series, though, is fun to use with a strong emphasis on learning through play. The popular animal characters featured in the Gay Way reading books are also prominent in the programs, and are illustrated on the attractive packaging.



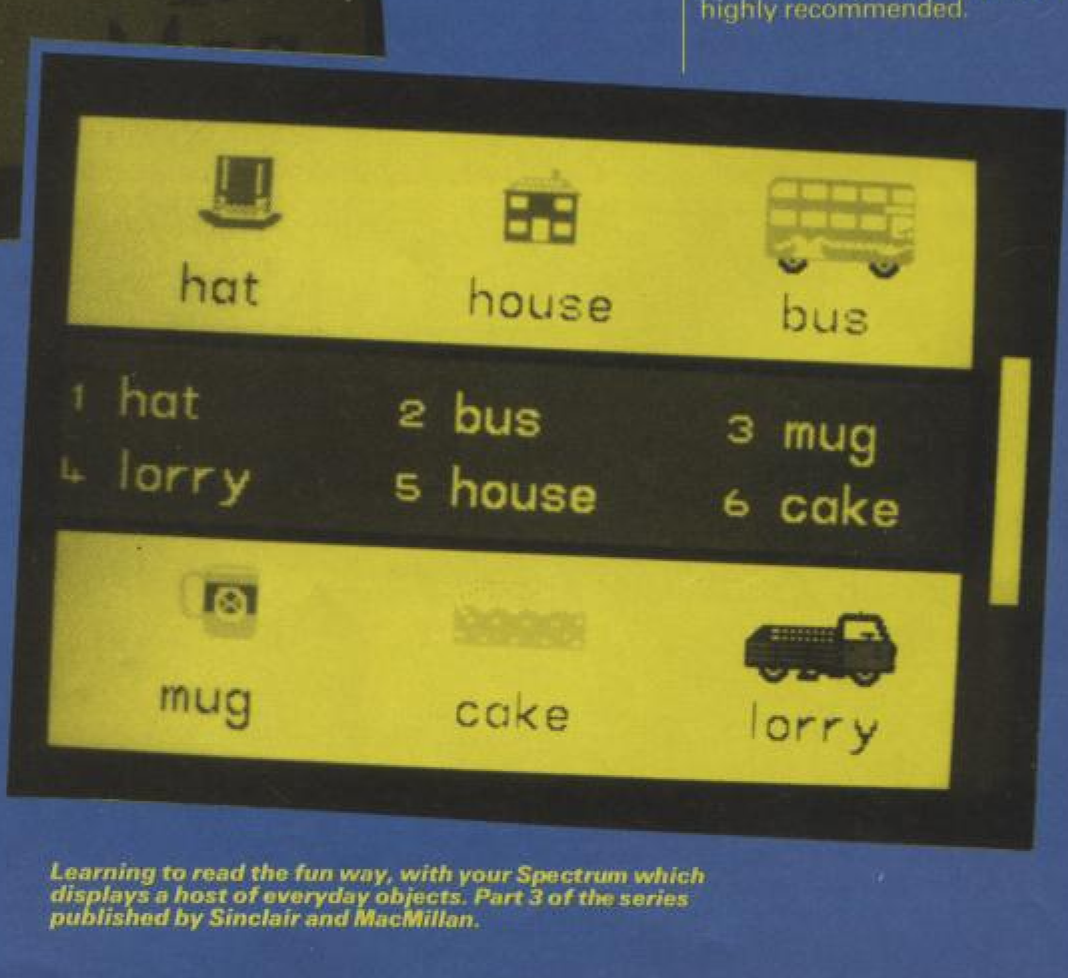
Quite why the pig has an apple and a coat is not clear. My money's on choosing the apple — what a fun way to learn to read in SINCLAIR-MACMILLAN's learn to read series.



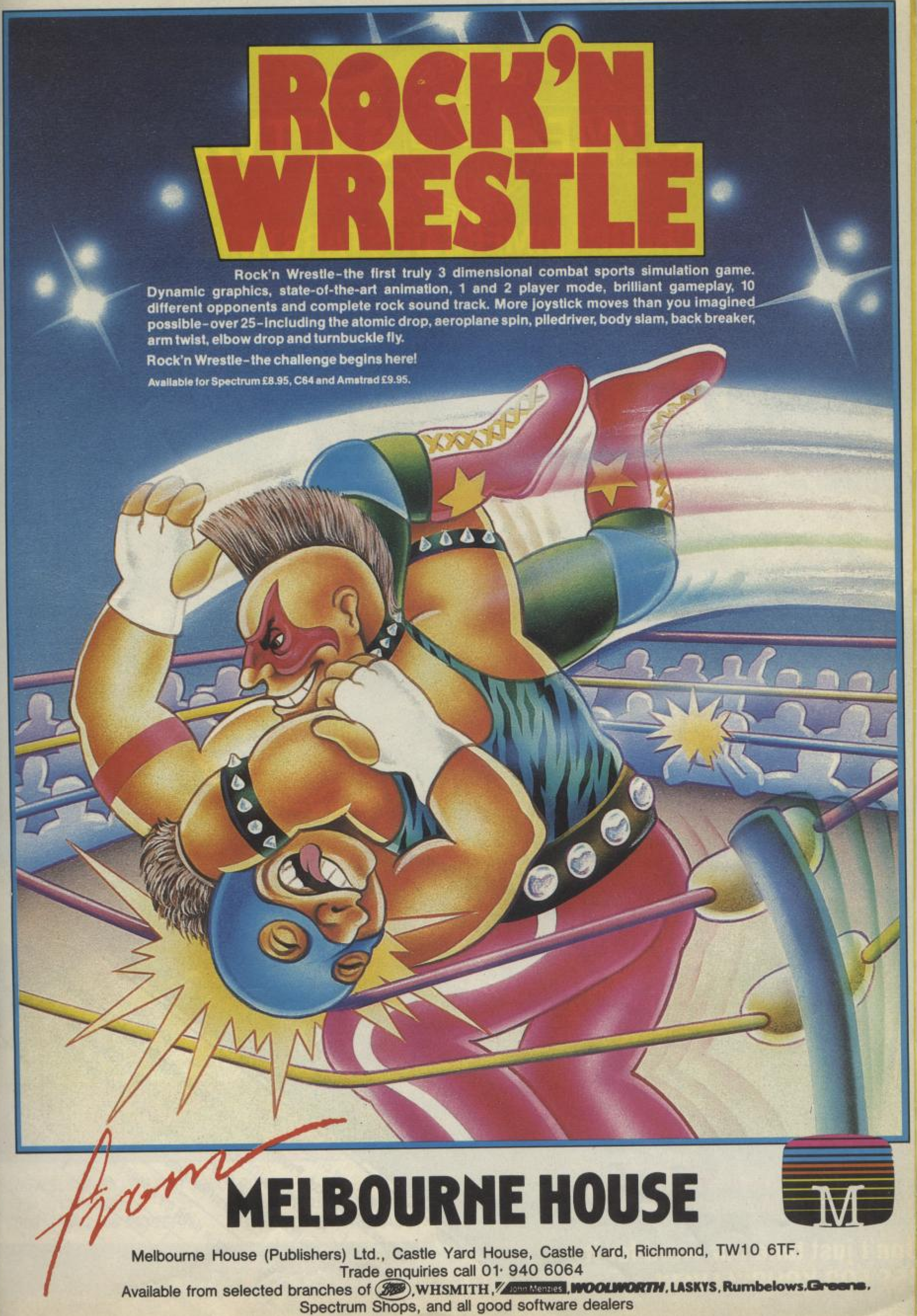
The cast of characters who appear in the LEARN TO READ programs.

COMMENTS

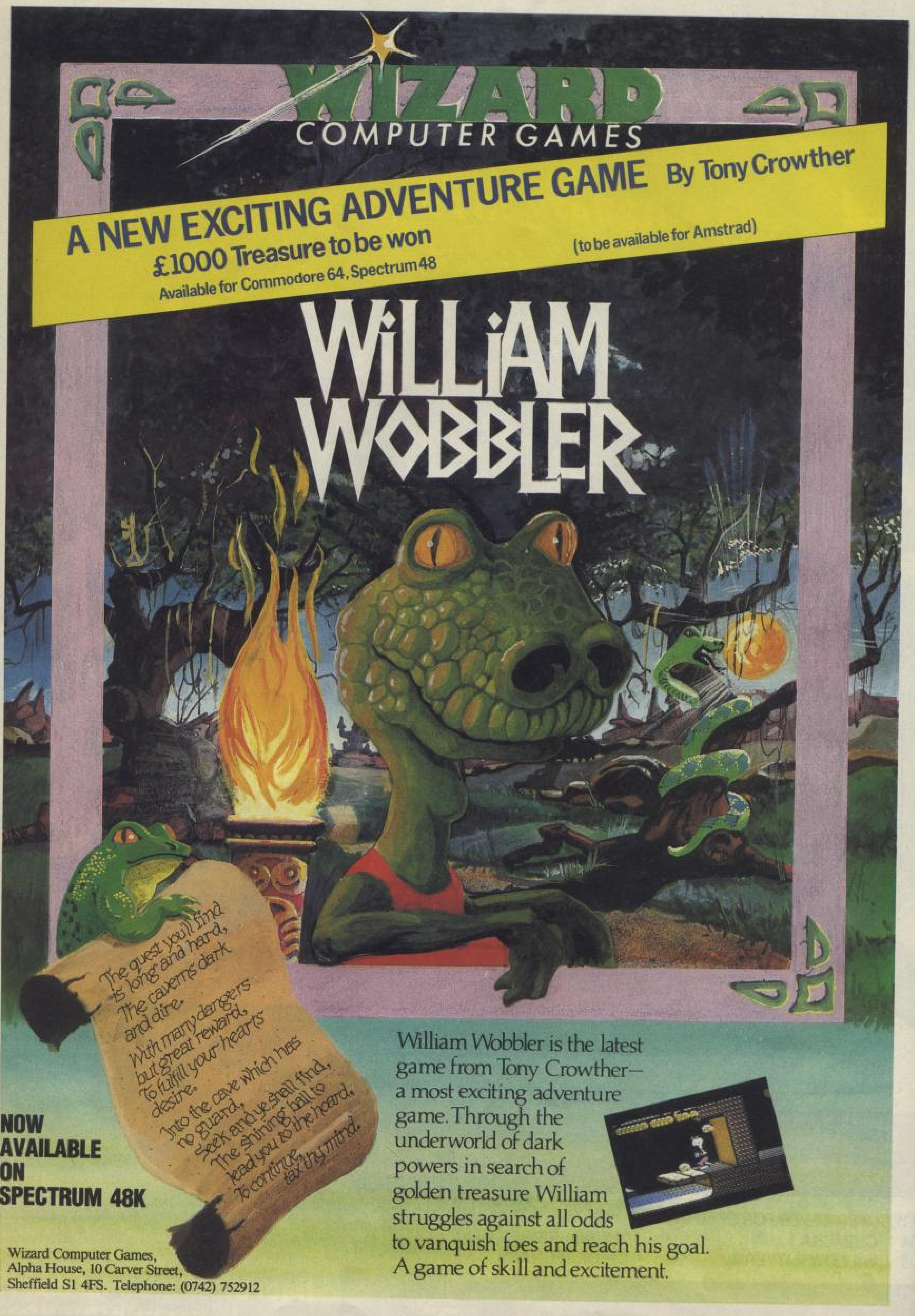
Control keys: moves from PRESS A KEY and PRESS A NUMBER to typing in the letters of a word
Keyboard play: very good
Use of colour: bright and clear
Graphics: very attractive
General rating: a professional series of programs which are highly recommended.



Learning to read the fun way, with your Spectrum which displays a host of everyday objects. Part 3 of the series published by Sinclair and MacMillan.


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JOHN RICHARDSON
MOO! OUR HERO, THE LURCH-HEAD, JETMAN, HAS FAILED TO STOP THE EARTH FROM BEING DONGLE-BOMBED, NOW THE POPULATION ARE CHASING HIM AN' HE'S HIDING IN THE ALIEN MOTHERSHIP! ALSO HIDING IN THE ALIEN SHIP IS THE SOURCE OF MUCHO BAD BREATH....
WHOSSAT GOIN' "WAURRR"?
WAURRR
LOOKIT! IT'S MY OL' PAL, THE MONSTER!
HE'S ALIVE!
BWA!
WAURR
AZZ
AZZA
AZZA
AZZZ
AZAZZ
AZZZ
ON REFLECTION... Y'CAN'T BLOW THE BRAINS OUT OF SOMETHING THAT HASN'T GOT ANY...
AZ..
AZZ...
AAZZ..
ARZZ..
AHH..
AHZZ..
AZ..
ZAH...
ZA
PAT-PAT
BUT I'M SO GLAD TO SEE YOU'RE ALIVE AND WELL, OL' BUDDY, BWAH... IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN GET YOU, OL' PAL?
WHADDYA WANT?
EH?
AZZ..
NAME IT!
ANYTHING AT ALL!
EH?
YOU NAME IT - I'LL FETCH IT
WHAT SAY?
AA..
HUH?
EH?
AAZZ...
AZAZZ..
BWAH! JUS' NAME IT OL' HORSE! ANYTHING!!
ANYTHING 'T ALL!
SOB
AZZ..
AH..
AZZ..
AZ...
ENN-EEE-THING!
BWA!
AZZZ..
ZAZZA..
AHAZZ
AZ..AHZZ...
AHZPRINZ
Y'GREAT SCALY PILLOCK! YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT!
STARTER
PUNG
OWH!
HERE'S YOUR ASPRINS! NOW WE GOTTA THINK OF A WAY TO THWART THE ALIEN INVADERS!
?
?
KA-SHH
SHUZZ-ZUZZ-KA-SHUZZ-ZUZZ-ZUZZ-BOOSS
AIEEE
...OOOO
ERE!
HE'S GORN AN' NICKED OUR MOTAH!
SHOW US THE WAY TO GO HOME...
NEB
THAT'S TORN IT, BOSS! THE LADS ARE BECOMING RESTLESS NOW THAT THE LOONY GOT OUR FLAG-SHIP!
FEAR NOT! I GOT A RADIO-LINK AN' I WILL TALK THE LOONY BACK!
HAIEE
WE'RE TIRED AN' WE WANNA GO T'BED
AIEEEE
LEADER TO LOO...ER... EARTHIE...LEADER TO EARTHIE... I KNOW YOU'RE THERE...
HAD A LI'L DRINK 'BOUT AN HOUR AGO...
AI-AI-AIEEE
WAHHEEEEE
AN' IT'S GORN RIGHT TO OUR HEADS
BUY BUNGO BONCE BALM
...OOOH...
...UM... BUNGOLIA!
BRING OUR SHIP BACK NOW, AN' WE'LL CROWN YOU KING OF... UM...
AN' ONE OF YOU LOT IS SINGING FLAT...



STREWFT!
MY GLORIOUS ARMY IS FINISHED... THEY'RE MORE FLAT THAN SINGING!
HU!
I GONNA GO FIND THE LOONY AN' MARMALISE IT!
HOME WE THE SHOW TO GO WAY
RIGHT! YOU'RE GONNA GET IT NOW, ALRIGHT! YOU BET! US HANDFUL OF SURVIVORS ARE GONNA FIGHT...
..TO THE DEATH!
OWW!
WELL, I'M NOT!
I'M SICK OF STANDING ON MY HANDS WHILE YOU COCK IT ALL UP...
NOW IT'S MY TURN! GIMME THE BIG HAT SO'S I CAN CAPITULATE!
SHAN'T!
SHALL!
SHAN'T!
SHALL
SHALL-SHALL-SHALL!
ACK!
SHALL!
SHAN'T-SHAN'T-SHAN'T
ARGH!
WOW!
THE CHIEF'S BLOWN HIS OTHER BRAINS OUT! THAT'S THE MOST COWARDLY FORM OF SUICIDE EVER! I'M OFF HOME!
ME THREE!
POW
MEANWHILE...
THEY'LL NEVER FIND US IN THIS OL' SCRAPYARD! HEE-HEE!
HEE...
HEE-HEE...
SNACK!
HO!
HO-HA-HA-HEE-HEE-HEE
OH-HAH-HA-HEE HEE
HOO-HAA-HAA-HAA-HAA-HAA
H-?
BOY! YOU SURE LET THE SPARE SHIP GET IN A MESS, BORK!
YEAH! BUT IT'S BETTER'N THAT MESS WE JUST LEFT, TORK!
WE SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT THAT LOONY ALONG TO CLEAN IT ALL UP, DORK!
ER... CLEANIN' CREW REPORTING FOR DUTY, CAP'N!
WHAT'S FOR LUNCH?
CHOKE!
GAG!
HMM! COULD IT HAVE BEEN SOMETHING I SAID...?
GIDDADOVIT!
CRAZY EARTHIE!
MEBBE I SALUTED WITH THE WRONG HAND...
ARGH! WE'RE HEADING FOR THAT SUN!
BUT OUR HEROIC MONSTER CAN'T HOLD IT'S BREATH ANY LONGER...
WOW! LOOKS LIKE OUR HERO'S HEADING FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE-

HA HA! HO HO! HEE HEE!

YOU COULD WIN THE CRAZIEST DAY OF YOUR LIFE!

Crash Competition

For a bit of fun, the Wacky and Zany, Zany and Wacky personages down at Mastertronics Towers in London have decided to offer a lucky reader the chance of an expenses-paid CRAZY DAY OUT.

Judging by our visits to them, and their visits to us, when crazy things happen quite normally, if they **really** try to give someone a Mad Day Out, things could get crazeee. Like loonie. Gabba Gabba Hey! And so on . . . .



The MAD range of games are a bit crazy — crazy on price. For £2.99 you get an awful lot of game. How do they do it? Why do they do it? Will they keep on doing it? What **is** it, anyway? Ho, ho. The butterflies are going green again.

It's the kind of thing that happens when you're shut up in a poky attic in Ludlow, forced to live on Old Flatulence Bitter as dispensed from the Frog and Lilypad and write competitions all the time. Butterflies, that is. Green ones. (And a few other colours too, but we'd better not go into that here, had we?)

So, my lovlies, "What do you have to do to be in with a chance of having a Zany Day Out with the lads and lasses of Mastertronic?" I hear you mumble. Simple. Reproduced on this page is an unfinished cartoon strip, starring the Secret Agent With No Name.

All you have to do is complete the story. You could, if you felt you were a bit of a cartoon artist, draw a couple more frames. Or the rest of a comic book. If, on the other hand, your penmanship is not so hot, there's no reason why the story couldn't be finished off in written form. It's entirely up to you how you go about completing the story. Just do it before 27th February, and whizz your entry to GABBA GABBA HEY!, CRASH TOWERS, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.



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PLAYING TIPS

from ROBIN CANDY



After last month's little hiccup (what on earth did Art try and do to my eyes?) I hear that I may soon get a new logo (yippee!) but it is unlikely to be this month because of the pressures of time, oh well it's a start, I suppose . . . .

I hope you all received what you wanted for Christmas along with plenty of new games. There's no shortage of excellent new releases at the moment. Most of these games I would like to feature in future issues of the Playing Tips, particularly *Zoids* and *Enigma Force*. So get playing and remember to send in your info. Featured next month will be the CORRECT version of the *Gyroscope* pokes: unfortunately they got misprinted. In the meantime you will just have to play the game properly — of course if you send in a SAE, I'll forward the correct routine to you. It looks like I will have to cut the intro a bit short mainly because of the lack of space and time to write. Okay then, on with the serious stuff.

FAIRLIGHT

These tips should have appeared last month but I'd written sooooo much that they couldn't fit in! So if you still want to know the rest of the *Fairlight* solution read on . . .

Take the Cross and two of the potions to the tower with the monks in it. Kill the first monk with the cross, the other monks can be killed with the potions. You will now be in a room with a trap door above it. Using barrels and books etc, climb up through the trap door but before doing this make sure you have the Book of Light with you. Climb up and you will see the Wizard. Get the key from the far end of the room and then give the Wizard the book. He will revert to his true form, an evil monk. Dodge him and climb back down through the trap door. Now proceed to the entrance of the castle and go through it using the key you got from the top of the tower and you will have completed the game.

THREE WEEKS IN PARADISE

As this is a fairly newish game here are just a few tips to keep you happy for the time being. Here are the hints as supplied by Craig Rogers **of Hayes and** Paul Houghton **St. Helens.**

First of all, get the Polo from behind the tradin' post sign. Now get Wilma's handbag from the beach (you can get to the beach by jumping at the picture of it). Go to the room with the crocodile in it and walk past him. Now go to the block of ice and use the mint. Pick up the hole and the goldfish bowl and go to the wishing well sheet. Now go to the wall on the far left and use the hole. The goldfish bowl will now get you past the spider to get the skeleton key. Go into the sea and swim to the locker. Pick up the can of spinach here.

YIE AR KUNG FU

By the time you read this *Yie Ar Kung Fu* should have been out for quite some time so I've decided to print these tips from Steve Crosswell **of Croydon. As testimony of their usefulness, I got up to Sword on my first go because I used them.**

BUCHU
Jump towards him straight away and do a couple of long punches followed by an ankle punch. Then finish Buchu off with a flying kick.

STAR
Once again jump towards your opponent but do a roundhouse instead. Follow this quickly with a couple of back kicks and then finish her off with a few rising kicks.

MUNCHA
This fellow is a bit difficult but still beatable. Walk towards him and then jump up. Perform a couple of flying kicks followed up with a couple of rising kicks. If this fails try lunge punches.

POLE
Jump towards Pole and perform about 5 lunge punches then switch to flying punches.

CLUB
Stand still and he will come towards you. As soon as he gets within hitting range, clobber him with a couple of flying punches then switch to rising kicks.

FAN
It may take some practise to beat this lady. Jump towards Fan and do about 6 lunge punches and then do some ankle punches to finish her off.

SWORD
Jump towards him and do some flying kicks and then a couple of lunge punches.

TONFUN
This opponent is very difficult to beat, so plenty of practise is needed here. Stand still until he gets within range and then perform a combination of lunge punches, ankle punches and flying punches.

BLUES
This is the Kung Fu master and as expected he is the tough cookie of the lot. Follow the same procedure as used on Tonfun but faster!!

MONTY ON THE RUN

Justin Allen **of Knaresborough sent in these tips for Gremlin's latest Smash. If you want to know what items are needed for the Freedom Kit you will have to wait until next month, because I don't want to spoil your enjoyment of the game.**

Before you start playing choose the Jetpac and the Gasmask from the survival kit. Whilst playing the game you will come across some screens with teleporters. The first one is in PIE—ARE—SQUARE — to get past this one walk through it when it is yellow. The second one, in the SEWERAGE WORKS, can be walked through when it is green. The third one is also in the sewerage works and this can be walked through when it is cyan. On your travels collect all the buns because they give you extra energy.

TAU CETI

I have to admit I haven't had much time recently to play this game (too much work, you see) but thanks to Mark Blackett **of Cleveland our lives have been made that much easier with these superb tips.**

1) It is very important to know the defence level of a city. If it is high then take your time attacking it, destroying one enemy one at a time.
2) Beginners should try and avoid cities with a high defence level.
3) Use your notepad to write down where you have been and which reactors you have visited.
4) There is an experimental missile at KZINTI which can destroy anything. On entering KZINTI you will see a lot of enemies in front of you. In order to avoid a speedy death accelerate away from them at top speed and use your rear view to pick off any robots that persue you. The missile is at the supply centre and is best saved for use at RUBIVA.
5) At PREEMA there is a reserve shield which is very useful if you get into a spot of bother.
6) When placing the cooling rods in the reactor be as quick as possible because the radiation level reaches critical very quickly.
7) Ordinary missiles can't be used against robots in high defence level cities nor against fortresses.
8) Infra red is very useful to determine what building is ahead, even in day time.

HACKER

If you had trouble with last months *Hacker* tips then this version of the solution as sent in by Patrick O' Sullivan **may help you out. On the subject of Activision I would watch out for their next game, *Ballblazer*. I've seen it on the Atari and the CBM 64 and all I can say about the game is that it is one of the simplest ideas ever conceived**

for a game that works beautifully. So watch out for that in the next few months, we will be (p)reviewing the game as soon as A. Wright of Activision (A. Wright what? I hear you say. But this is hardly the time or place to go into such sordid details) gets us a copy.

1) Go to Paris and offer £5,000 cash for a part of a document and buy the Swiss chalet and the chronograph.
2) Go to Egypt and offer the chronograph and buy the Emerald scarab and the Golden statuette of Tut.
3) Go to Athens and offer the Golden statuette of Tut but don't bother buying anything.
4) Go to Russia and offer the Emerald scarab. Once again don't bother buying anything.
5) Go to New York and offer the Swiss chalet and only buy the stocks and bonds.
6) Go to Korea and offer the stocks and bonds. Buy the pearls and the camera.
7) Go to China and offer the Pearls. Buy the Jade carving.
8) Go to South America and offer the Jade carving. Don't buy anything.
9) Go to San Francisco and offer the camera. Buy the Beatles album. Don't bother buying anything.
10) You should now have all of the document. So take it to Washington DC to finish the game.

At various points in the game you will be asked questions by security as a check; the answers are as follows:
Level 1. check — Magma, Ltd. (don't forget the comma and the full stop)
Level 2. check — AXD—0310479
Level 3. check — Hydraulic
Level 4. check — Australia

MIKIE

This is another game that is reviewed in this issue — but considering it was released ages ago (it just missed the Christmas Special deadline) I think it is alright if a few tips are printed for it. Thanks to Chris Mobbs **of Hampton Magna for supplying the vital info.**

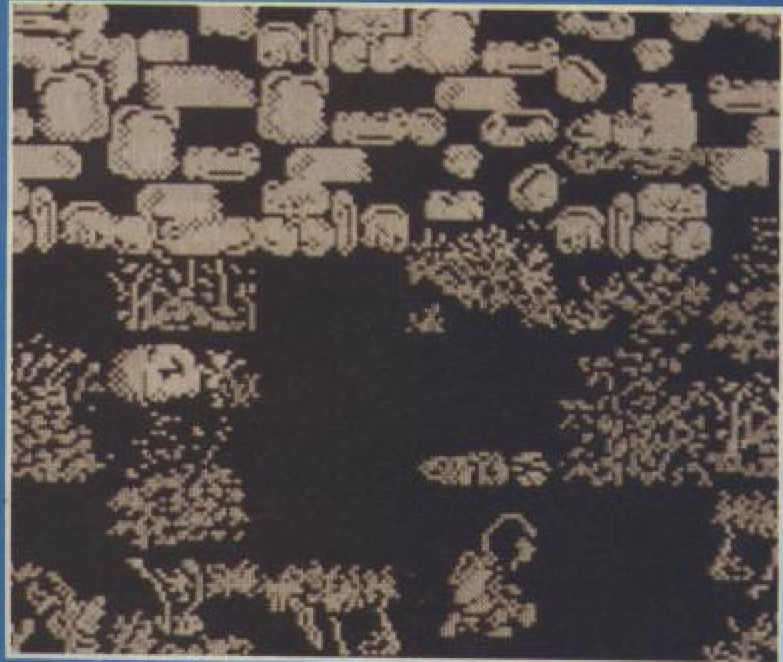
When in the **classroom** wait until the teacher is quite some distance away and then go up to his desk and shout three times in front of the chair and you get a bonus.

In the **locker room**, once you have collected all the hearts, give all of the men a ball (if any left). Now go to the second locker from the door on the left and shout three times (you must be exactly in the middle) and a bonus comes up.

In the **cafeteria**, once you have collected all the hearts, go up to the serving hatch, make sure you are exactly in the middle, and shout three times for a bonus.

Once you have collected all the hearts in the **gym** then shout three times at the loud speaker on the left hand side. You are rewarded with a bonus.

In the **corridors** open the doors to see if there is a girl inside, she rewards you with a bonus, but be careful because sometimes there is a fist or a foot waiting to hit you.



ROBIN OF THE WOOD

I had barely made a plea for tips for this game when Jamie Paterson **of Huntingdon came to the rescue with this information:**

The wild boar lurk towards the bottom of the forest. Avoid them at all costs, they prove more dangerous than the Normans themselves. Now go and look for the Norman Bishop. He has a guard walking around with him. Shoot the guard and he will drop two bags of gold. You need three bags of gold for each weapon so shoot three bishops to get the gold needed for both of the weapons. Once you have the required amount of gold go and find the Ent (he is not in the same location each game) and he will give you a weapon for the gold.

On your journies around the forest collect the flowers. On entering a location with a witch she will take them from you, and may transport you to another location — not always the one you want to be in. Should you lose your way then you can use the bodies of the Norman soldiers as markers.

If your energy gets a bit low then try and find the Druid. He will give you an extra life and restore your energy.

If you get thrown into the dungeons then go and find the key (go up and right, it is in that direction). Once you have got this you can leave the dungeons and get back into the game. Beware of the Sheriff: he takes all your possessions and throws you into the dungeon!

ASTROCLONE

Continuing the saga of the Astroclones' quest Steve Turner **adds another chapter to the story.**

TERMINA

Termina — the largest known computer complex in the galaxy. Now only a few machines survive, the remnants of a once proud outpost. The Clone warriors discovered the base early on in the mission but, unable to defeat the snake like Kri, sealed the base off with a larger cordon of ships. Now with the Acron device surely success was imminent? Dormant for over 2000 years few of the Kri pods had hatched. Waving the Acron Device before him, the first Clone entered. Only to be shortly dispatched with a mindbolt.

Another Clone entered this time with the Termina pass. Picking up the Acron Device he grimly assaulted the Kri. All were swept before him as he waved the Acron Device, even their pods shrivelled as they were hit by the deadly instrument.

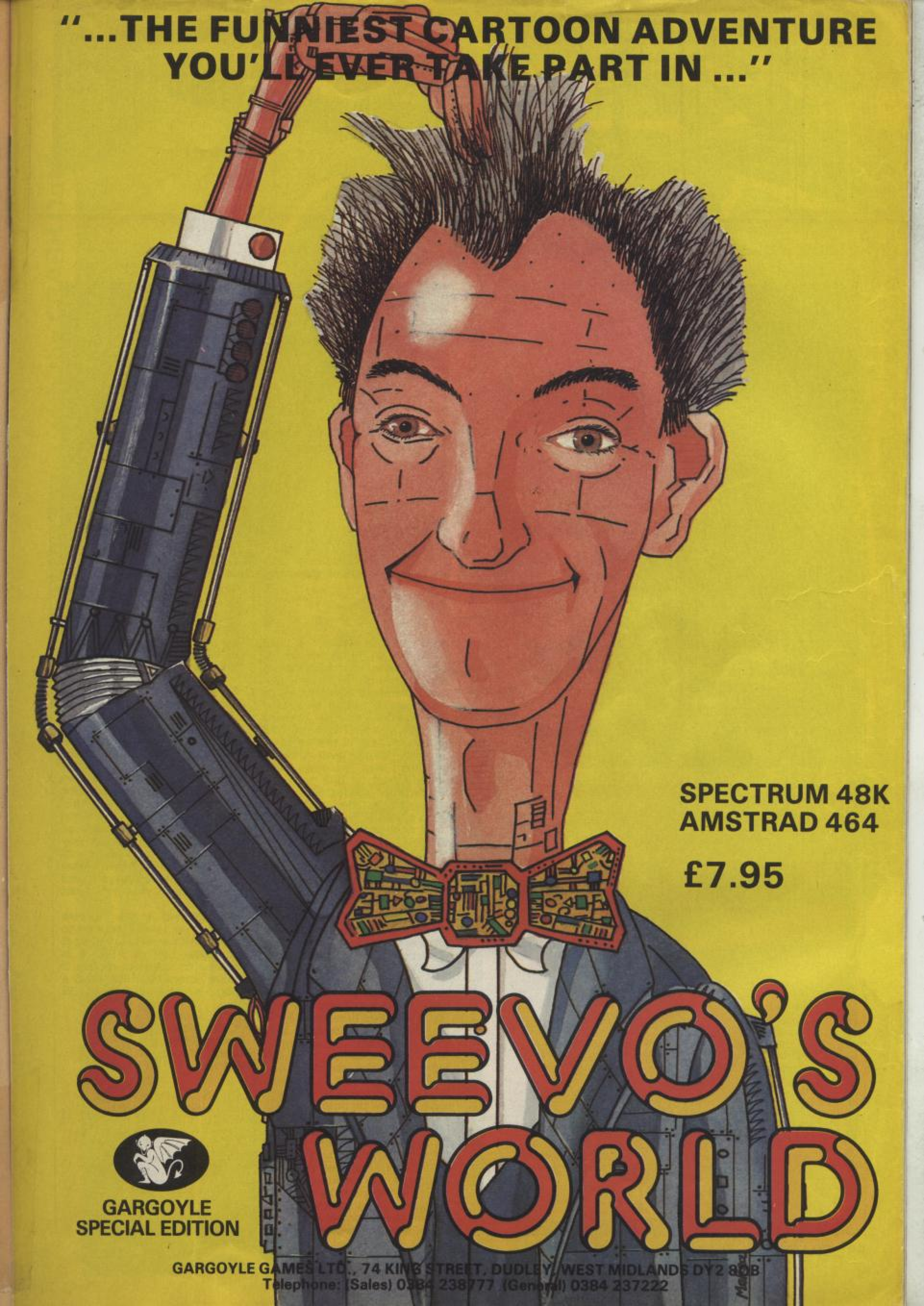
Seeing a key below a floor grill the Clone searched for a wire to fish it out with. To take the wire he smashed a laser disc and cut it. An energy ball, when placed with another, deactivated it revealing an Isocase. Opening the case with the key the ID device was found. Once activated by a terminal a beamer was revealed. At the same time a beam up point was revealed in a room which mysteriously drained energy.

Beaming down, the Clone found, to his horror, a trap — an energy plate which was programmed to kill if the user did not identify himself. The ID device opened a wall safe and a key was found. This opened another safe which was guarded by an energy ball. This safe protected a securipass. The ID device pacified a sentinel droid enabling the Clone to activate the pass by placing it on the lower part of the droid. Behind a locked door another sentinel droid "stamped" the pass. Finally, the highest security level was accessible.

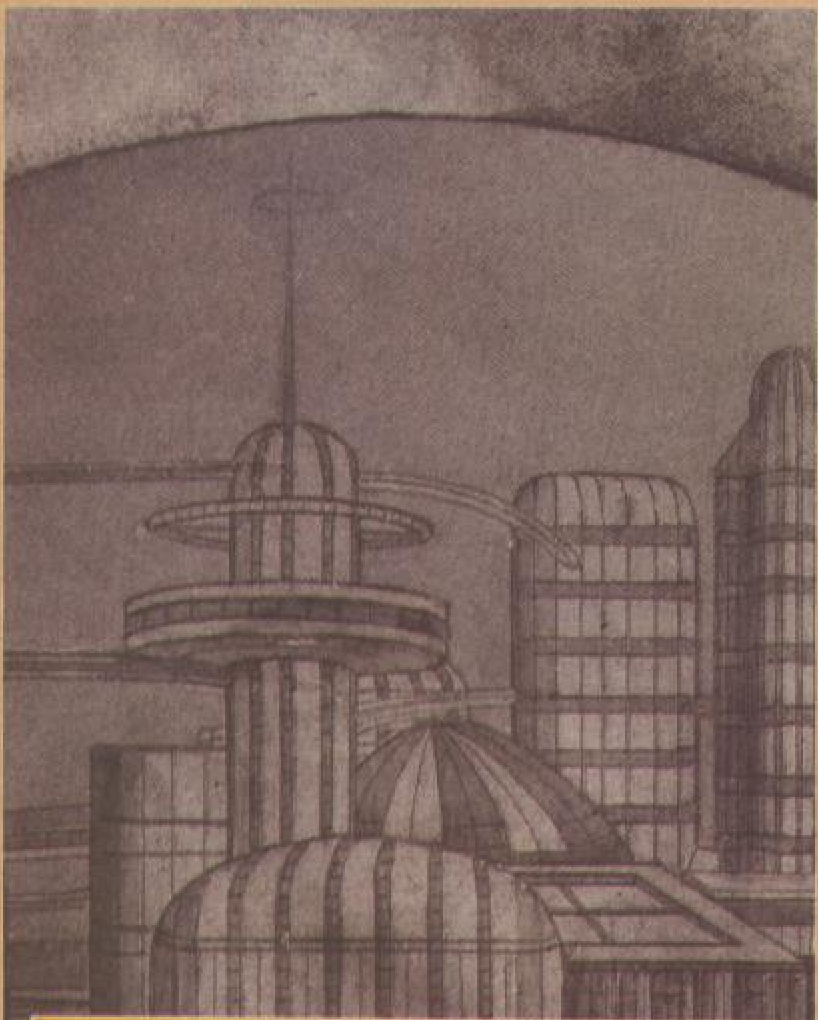
Fierce sentinel droids guarded the high security level. Wave after wave attacked: casualties were high. Only after a second ship of clones was despatched was the base finally cleared. The ID device was able to open a wall safe containing a key pad which opened yet another safe. The Sonic key in this case opened an Isocase, which was revealed when the ID device was placed on an energy ball generator. The Isocase contained a pass in code. Once the code was fed into the decoder program it was revealed that the code was the pass to the final pass, Ultron.

When a credit card was inserted in to the tea machine it jammed and had to be booted in order to get a cup of tea. The Clone returned to the upper level where he accidentally spilt the tea on the terminal. It promptly deactivated. Now the bomb could be fetched and assembled.

The final assault had begun.


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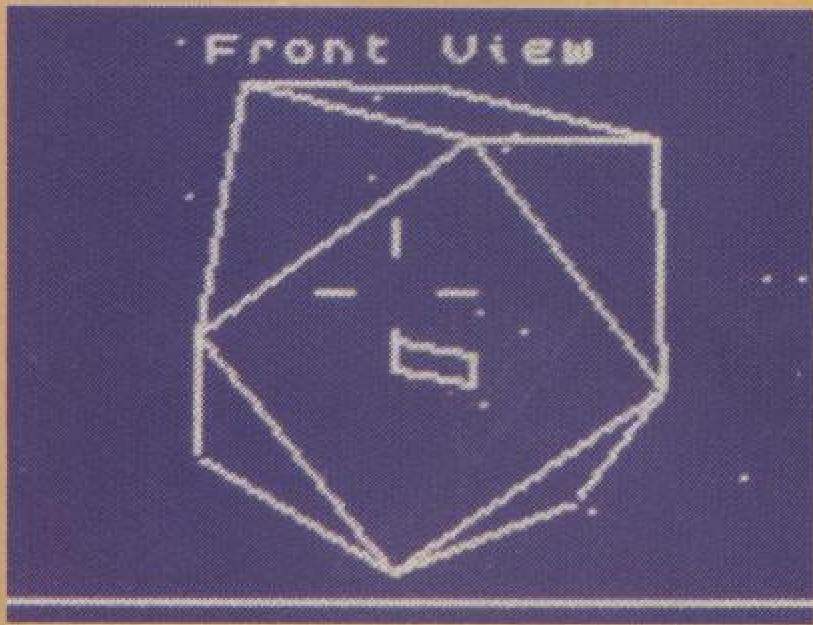
PLAYING TIPS



MARSPORT

After revealing how to complete stage 1 of Marsport John McCann **of Lisburn in N. Ireland wrote in with the solution to stage 2.**

1) Go to the sanctum to get the clue 'I'm the sentry; 5 pairs for entry; city through, 5 screens each two'.
2) Get the Mars map and put it in the key slot of the Bar (Marsbar, see).
3) Get the tea from the Bar.
4) Go to sector d level g and get the insect.
5) Get the syringe from the Chemist (open it with a pair of boots) on sector c level d.
6) Get the point from the Oratory sector i, level b.
7) Combine the above four items to make the antidote.
8) With the antidote go east from sector e level c and enter the danger room. When until the countdown has finished and then put the antidote in the locker for future use.
9) Get the clue from the vidtex unit on sector h level c. 'One monkey says why the other two can't'.
10) Make another eyeshield and get another pair of earmuffs.
11) Combine the earmuffs and the eyeshield to make the Y token.
12) Get the valium from the chemist and go north from sector b level b.
13) Enter the danger room and wait until the nerve bomb has done off. Put the valium in the locker for future use.
14) Get the topee from sector f level b.
15) Get the kettle from sector f level f.
16) Put the kettle in the key slot of the boiler room on sector i, level j.
17) Get the helmet from the boiler room.
18) Combine the helmet and the topee to make the power booster.
19) Combine the power booster and your gun to make a hyper-gun, you can now kill the Sept Warlords.
20) Get the clue from the Vidtex unit on sector f level b. 'One is holy with skill after church'.
21) Get the strainer from the bar on sector c level f.
22) Get the sunchart from the map room.
23) Combine the sunchart and the strainer to make the T token.
24) Go west from sector d level level e and kill the Warlord.
25) Now go and get the cext month to find out how to get out alive with the plans.



ELITE

After my little plealet I've been showered by hundreds of letters detailing various strategies and missions. There are too many people to mention here so thanks go to you all, you know who you are. There is a massive cheat in *Elite* but I dare not tell it to you for fear of the wrath of Firebird, Colin (known as Clumsy Colin) and his gang have already beat up one poor unsuspecting pedestrian just because he decided to hit one of Colin's friends and I don't want to be next on the Firebird mafia list, do I?

It is generally accepted that the large cargo bay is the first major piece of equipment to buy followed by an ECM and a decent laser system. Once you are equipped suitably then the fun starts. When your rating has risen to Competent or over then Galactic Hyperspace to another galaxy. After flying around for a while you will get a mayday message from a space station. Here it asks you if you will save some refugees because the sun is going nova. Accept the mission and launch, then hyperspace immediately. Take the refugees to another planet and use the sell option to end the mission where up you are given a gift for your services.

Sometimes when you are fighting pirates you will notice that an Asp keeps blinking on and off. Shoot this Asp and pick up its cargo. You will find you have now got a cloaking device which is activated by pressing Y. The only disadvantage is that it tends to eat up your energy.

While on the subject of *Elite*, Graeme (our beloved ED) has asked me to pass judgement on ACS's *Elite Editor*. Once you have loaded the program in it allows you to build a Cobra Mk4. On this ship you can define what equipment you have (including the Cloaking Device). It also allows you to define your rating, the number of credits you possess and the size of your cargo bay (max 250 tonnes). This process is very simple and resembles the equip option on the actual *Elite* game. Once you are satisfied with the ship you have built up then you can save the data out as a normal *Elite* file. Now load in your *Elite* original and load in the saved data, you now have a much more powerful ship. The only drawback with the editor is that it doesn't allow you to define where you want your ship to be, you always start at Lave.

On the whole the program provides a useful service to players who aren't very good at the game and at £1.99 it is reasonable value for money. If you're interested then send a cheque or postal order for £1.99 to:

A.C.S. Software
PO BOX 608
BLACKHEATH
LONDON
SE3 7ER

I seem to have filled up my available space this month so you will have to wait until next month for tips on *Back to Skool*, *Three Weeks in Paradise* and *Sweevo's World*. In the meantime, if you've got any useful tips then send them to me at:
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GUNFRIGHT

Producer: Ultimate
Retail price: **£9.95**
Language: **machine code**

Now y'all listen up. This here town's got itself a new Sheriff, reckons he's goin' to clear the town of the meanest fastest gun Totin' Bunch of Rootin' Tootin' Gun Slingers which ever did hit the Wild West. Goes by the name of Sheriff Quickdraw: Yes Siree.

As to be expected, in Ultimate's latest release you play the part of Sheriff Quickdraw. While relaxing in your Office a telegram arrives detailing your task: to clear the streets of gunfighters. This task may seem straightforward but the public have ignored your warnings and remain outside, to your horror. For if you should accidentally blow away a poor innocent bystander then you are fined.

The game starts with a picture of a gunsight and bags of money scrolling downwards. In this first stage you must shoot the bags of money to finance your antics. Speed is of the essence, because money plays an important part in the next stage of the game, and you need all you can get. After a short while the money supply dries up and you commence the main part of the game.

In stage two, Filmation II (Ultimate's 3D masking routines) rears its head again. This part of the game bears a strong resemblance to Ultimate's previous release, *Nightshade*, and plays in a similar manner — although there is more depth to this game. Black Rock, the town, is full of women and children who point in the direction of the villain currently being pursued. If you bump into pedestrians you lose a life — and if you shoot one of them by accident or even just for fun you are fined an amount of money which varies as you play the game.

As you walk around Black Rock you'll need to use your revolver. It contains six bullets which you can use at will, and once all of them have been used up your Super-Slung Six Shot Slinger will reload automatically. You have to pay for ammunition, and like the fines for blowing away townsfolk, the cost varies throughout the game.

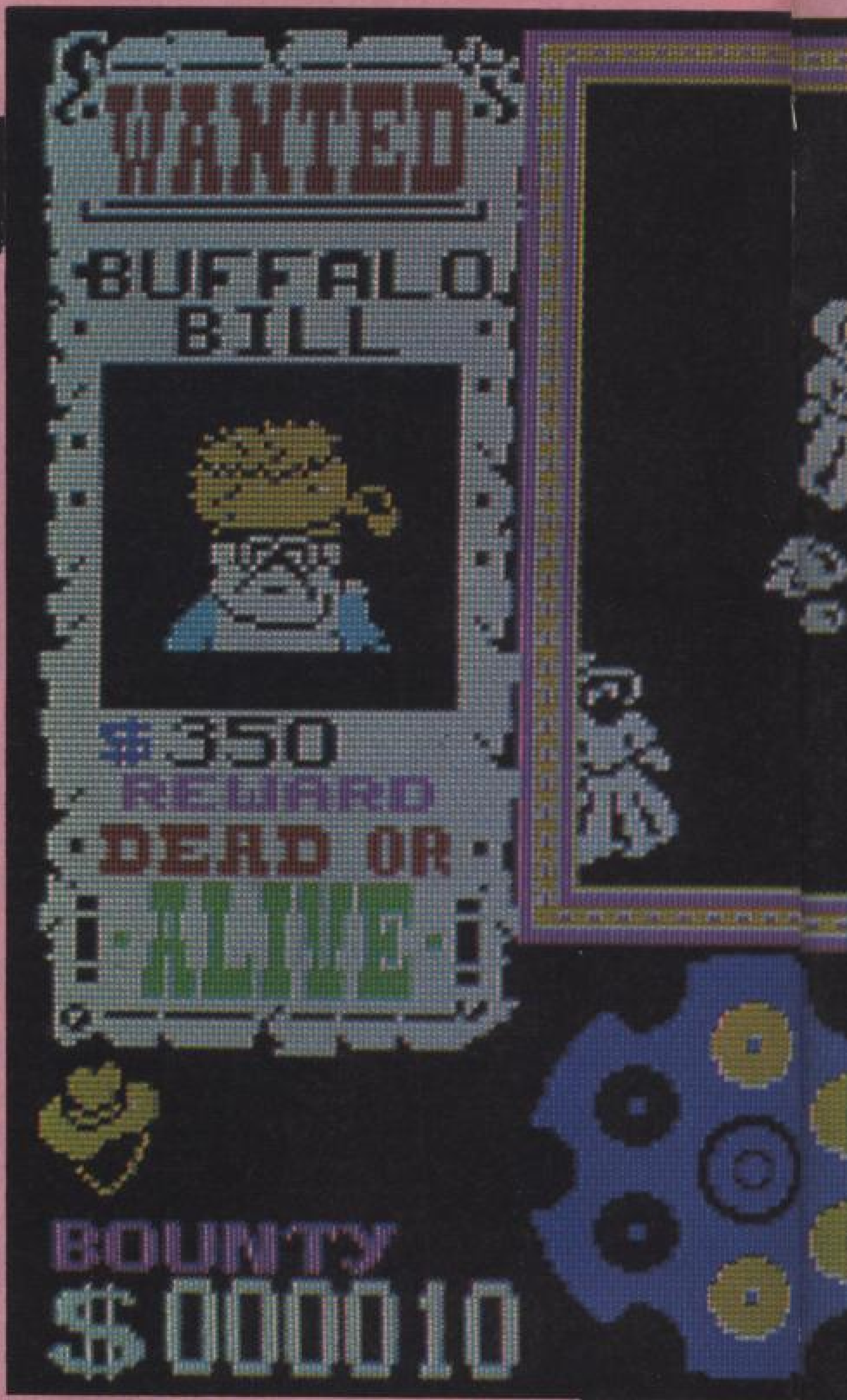
Sooner or later in the game you will stumble across a horse. This little beastie is not the normal four-legged type horse but appears to be little more than the Pantomime variety. Like most things in life, and everything in Black Rock, the horse costs money to use — again, the price varies throughout the game. The horse confers two advantages: it allows you to run over pedestrians (great fun) and it greatly increases your speed. This can sometimes be a bit of a disadvantage, because when you're scooting around at top speed it is very easy to have a rather painful collision with one of the many cacti that litter the streets.

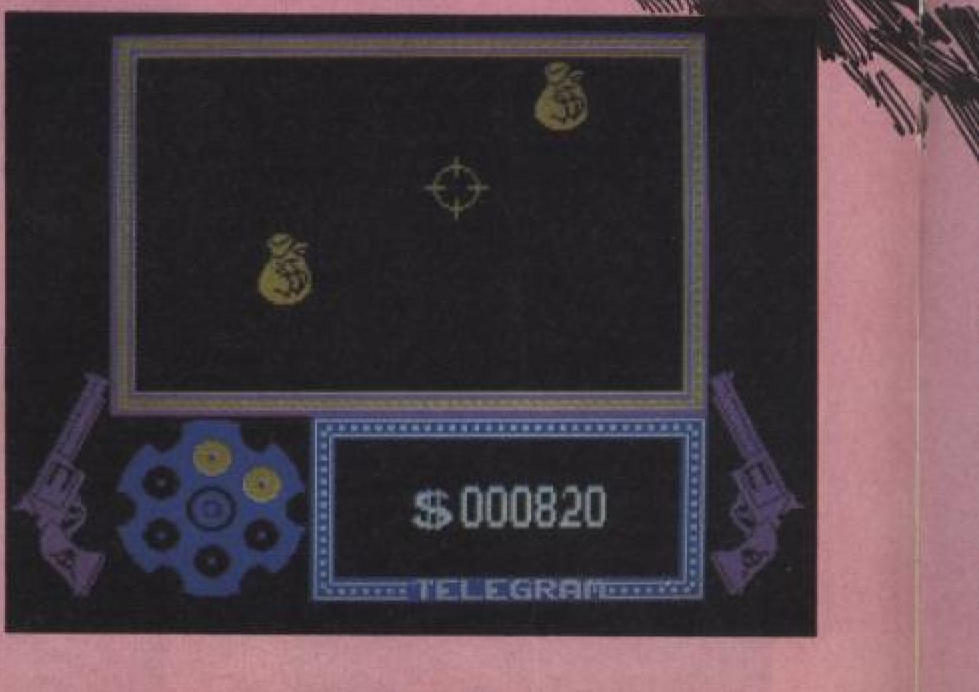
Once you have located an outlaw you must apprehend him. To do this you must first shoot him — the screen cuts to show the outlaw along with your gunsight. This stage of the game is just like the good old fashioned shoot outs. You have to be quick with your trigger finger or else the outlaw dispatches you with one well placed bullet. If you win the shootout then you receive a reward which varies in accordance with the difficulty rating of the current outlaw. You are then transported back to the jail to begin your quest for the next lawbreaker.

The screen is split into several parts. The main window, on the top right of the screen, displays the current play area and expands to occupy the whole of the top half of the screen for the start of the game and the gunfight sequence. The rest of the screen displays the name of the current outlaw being pursued (not in gunfight mode or the money collection sequence) the amount of money in your possession and the number of lives remaining. The last window deals solely with telegram messages which give you all sorts of bits of information about rewards and so on.

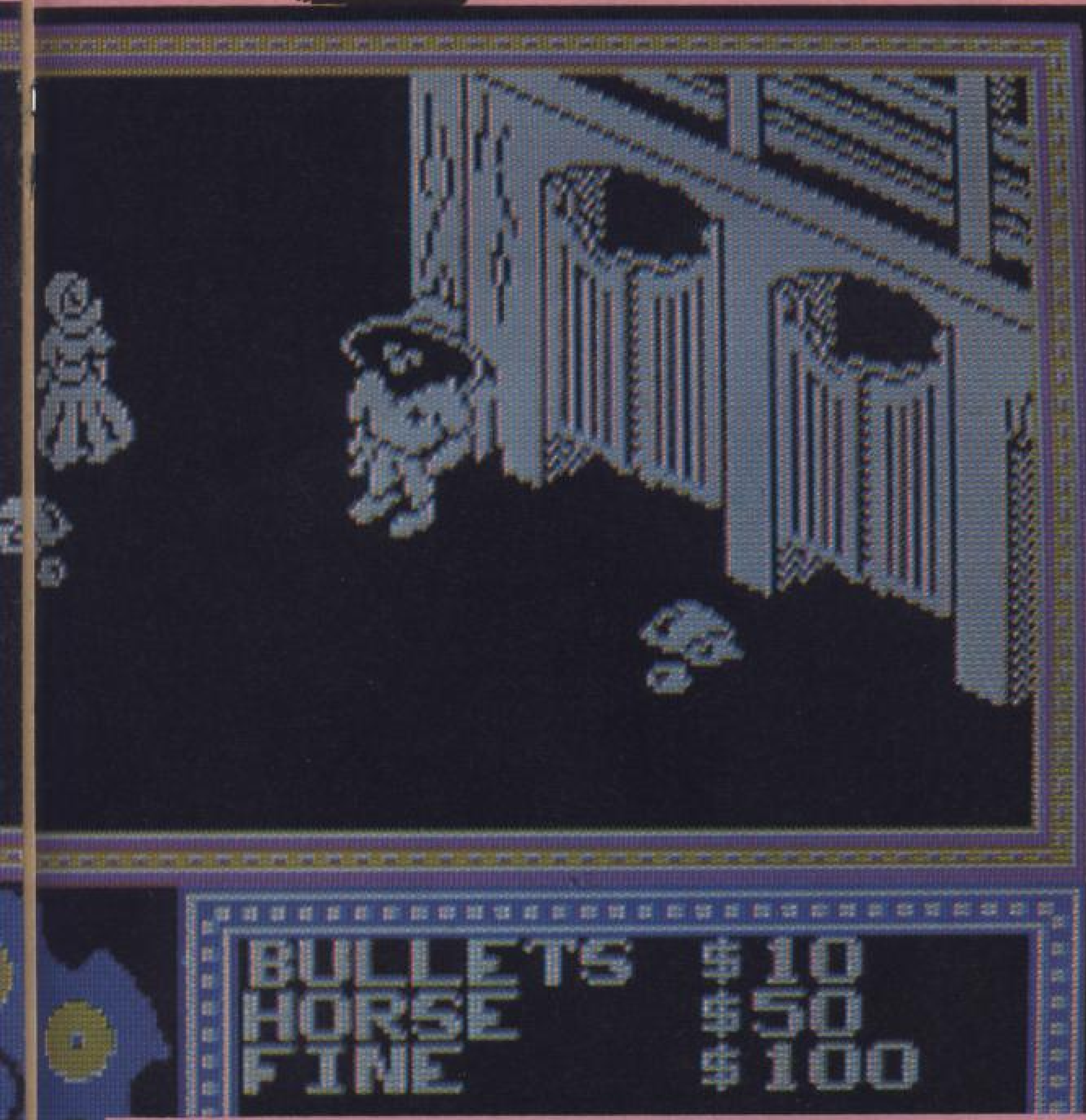
CRITICISM

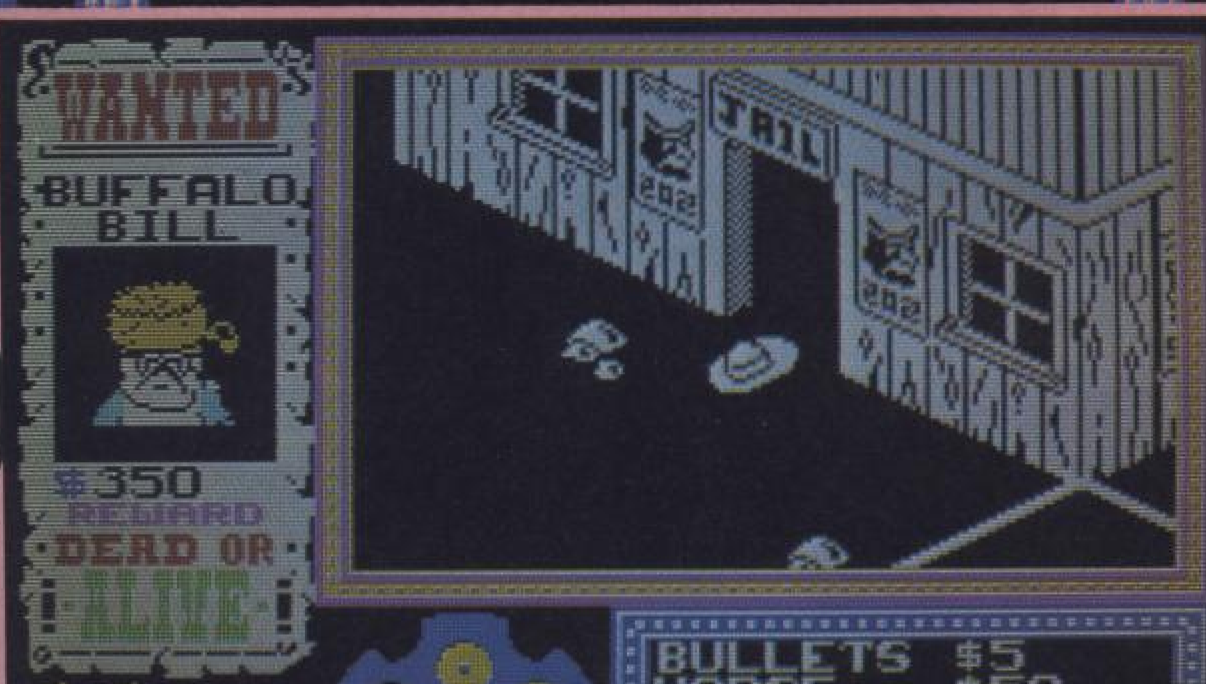
● **'Recently Ultimate have come under a lot of stick concerning their product. Well they're back, upfront and with a vengeance too. Looking at** Gunfright **it appears to be graphically similar to** Nightshade: **that's true, but the game element of** Gunfright **has been considerably developed. The several different stages make it a very enjoyable**





T





game and highly addictive. As usual the standard of graphics is high and the whole game is beautifully presented. If you're an arcade game freak then this one is definitely worth considering. Ultimate have finally got back to their roots. Let's just hope they can keep this standard up in their future games!'

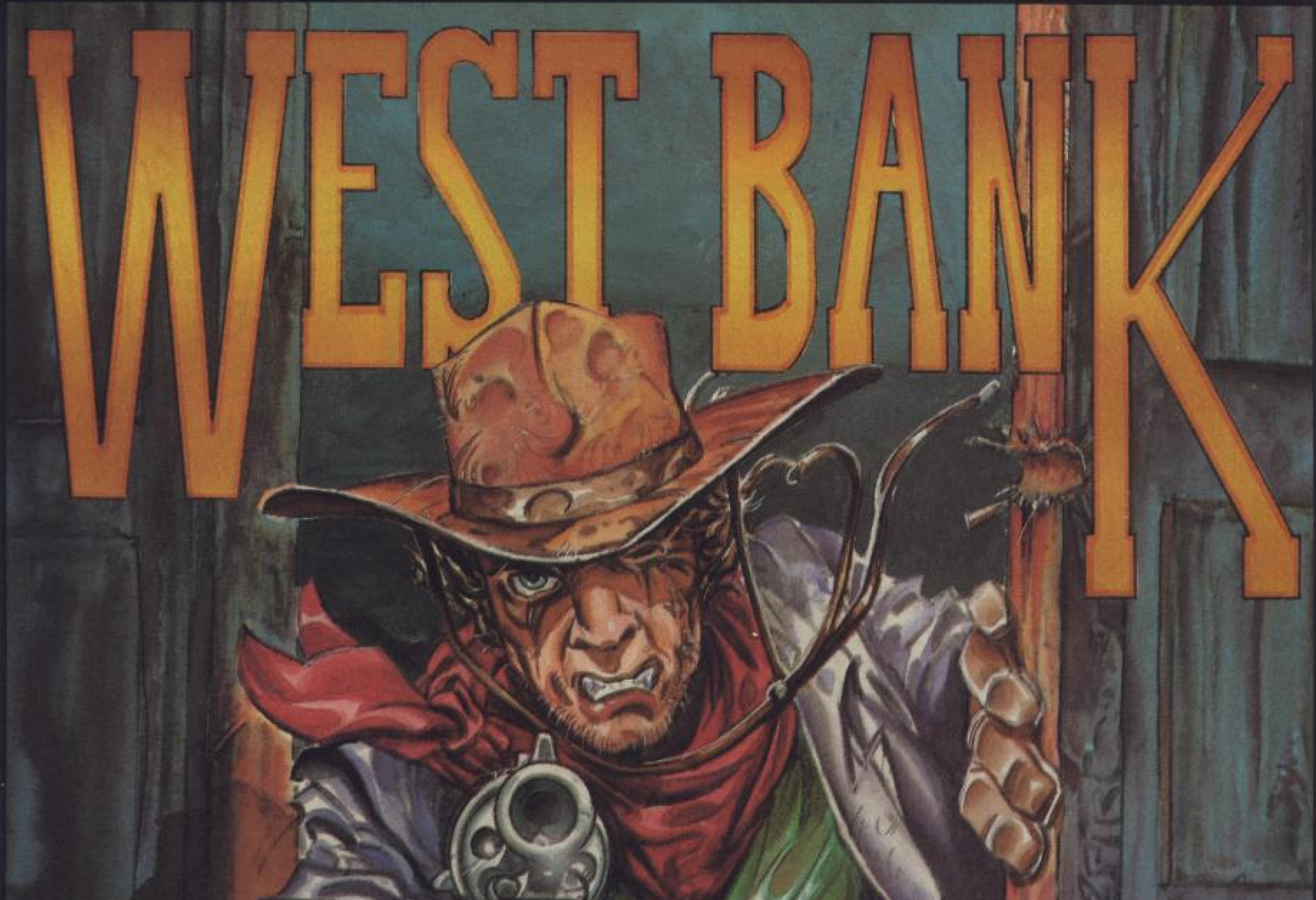
● *'Out of all the recent Ultimate games this is the best — it has a plot which is interesting and immediately playable. The graphics are, as always, excellent, as is the sound. I found this one very playable and fairly easy to get on with. The people in the town point in the direction of the baddies, so tracking them down is pretty easy, shooting them however is another matter. I very much enjoyed playing* Gunfright *as it is fun to play and has lasting appeal, although I don't think another 3D game from Ultimate will go down as well as this.'*

● 'Well it seems that Ultimate have made up for the recent spate of not-so-good games with *Gunfright. Some may argue that it's a Nightshade* clone but a very good and addictive one. The graphics are really good with a few nice touches like a horse which enables you to go faster and small children excitedly pointing the way to the nearest outlaw. The arcade sequences involved are colourful and very detailed. Definitely deserves a CRASH Smash.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Gunfight mode X, V or N for left. C, B or M for right. A, S, D or F for walk. 1 — 0 for fire. Fastdraw mode: X,V or N for left. C,B or M for right. Row beginning Q, W, E, R, T etc for up. Row beginning A, S, D, F, G etc for down. Top row for fire
Joystick: Cursor, Kempston and Interface II
Keyboard play: responsive, but a bit confusing
Use of colour: little colour, to avoid attribute problems
Graphics: detailed backgrounds and characters
Sound: title tune otherwise limited to spot effects
Skill levels: gets progressively harder
Screens: scrolling playing area plus moneybag and shootout screens
General rating: A very enjoyable game. An improvement over Ultimate's last release

Use of computer	92%
Graphics	94%
Playability	94%
Getting started	90%
Addictive qualities	92%
Value for money	88%
Overall	**92%**



£7.95

Defend the spoils of the famous gold rush, guard the riches hidden behind the walls of the West Bank. Desperate characters plan and scheme their way to the gold, bloodthirsty gunmen try to blast their way to instant fortune but watch out for the innocent bystanders – a stray shot will harm your reputation for ever. Keep a keen eye on the horizon and your trigger finger poised for action – the law of the West is still the law of the gun.

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Amstrad

Gremlin Graphics

Spectrum 48K

Gremlin Graphics Software Limited Alpha House, 10 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS. Tel: (0742) 753423

THE WAY OF THE ROGER — OF FANTASY, FIGHTING AND . . .

'Fancy a trip out to Sheffield on Tuesday, Sean?' asked our Exec Publisher, Roger Kean knowingly. He rubbed his palms in eager anticipation of my reply.

'Sure,' was my nonchalantly issued response. I felt like giving BR some hassle anyway. But it wasn't as simple as that — is it ever . . . No, Roger said that he could hire me a car (Mad Max meet Mad Masterson). Roger drew me an 'excellent map' (his words, not mine). The excellent map showed me how join the A68 from the A5. Yours truly drove up and down the A5 for two hours looking for a non-existent A68 . . . Come back BR, all is forgiven. In the meantime — **ROGER!!!!!!!**

I made it to Sheffield in the end, of course. I'm a genius after all. Soon I was inside the hallowed offices of Gremlin Graphics and it was down to business.

Interactive fantasy stories have been popular for a few years now, and the craze has still not reached its peak, according to the marketing research people. One of the latest series to appear is the **Way of the Tiger** series published by Knight books, co-written by **Jamie Thomson** (ex features editor of WHITE DWARF magazine) and author **Mark Smith**. The series puts the reader in the role of a Ninja warrior in a series of martial arts adventures flavoured with a touch of fantasy. Gremlin have acquired the rights to produce the computer game tie-ins to the range and I was there to get a glimpse of the first of their games.

As **Ian Stewart**, the Gremlin Guru, explained, the first of the games is an arcade adventure but subsequent games will be more conventional adventures with no animation. *Way of the Tiger* is also the title of the first game and the plot is something of a prequel to the series by Messrs Thomson and Smith. It involves a really nasty piece of work who has cold bloodedly killed off a close relative. You are out to avenge the death but before the final confrontation, there are a variety of other beasties and evil-doers to eliminate.

You have two characteristics — Endurance and Inner Force, the levels of which are constantly displayed in the lower part of the screen. When these are both thoroughly depleted, it's good old Game Over time. They are wittled away by receiving and applying damage to or from the various creatures and enemies likely to be encountered during the game. Of course receiving damage results in more of a characteristic being depleted than making a successful attack upon something else, but even then, the amount of Endurance or Inner Force lost, is related to what is actually involved in the combat sequence.

So what do you actually see on the screen? Well, as might be expected, the atmosphere is distinctly oriental. The foreground and middle distance are littered with ancient ruins, willow trees (courtesy of some fabled plate designers) and boulders. It is possible to move behind or in front of some of these. In the far background were some distinctly Himalayanesque mountains. Incidentally, in the screen shots elsewhere on



These screen shots reveal the variety of moves — but wait till you see the animation!

... IMAGINARY 'A' ROADS

these pages, the mountains for the Spectrum version are situated so low as to cause colour clash when a character jumps. This will be altered for the final version with the mountains being 'further away' to avoid this happening.

This area is approximately twenty screens across and you are free to wander wherever you may, fighting the baddies. Ah yes, as for the baddies, there are several. Some of these are other Ninjas of varying fighting ability and intelligence. There are also some sword wielding Goblins, some horned, bipedal and viscious looking weirdos and some *really* nasty Giants. Each of the different creatures require different fighting techniques. For instance, it's impossible to do a flying kick against a Goblin because the little terrors are too small. It's also useful to remember that getting too close to the Giant is fatal because of his incredible strength (the entire screen shakes when he walks on). Constant backing away while risking the occasional flying kick is advisable when dealing with one of these. One of the interesting features about the way the game handles combat procedures is that if your (or your opponent's) strength is low, then the amount of damage inflicted by a given blow is also low.

As is the norm with recent games of this type, several different moves are available by careful manipulation of the joystick. Where Gremlin have tried to go one better than their competitors is in the animation of these moves. Both the character and the monsters are well drawn and animated. When a chop is delivered to another Ninja's neck, his head snaps backwards as it would in real life. Similarly, a well placed kick will have the opponent clutching the wounded area. If two opponents bypass each other, they actually turn around to face the other, rather than being 'flipped over' as in other games. The fighting sequences really are dramatic with a great variety of moves and smoothness in play.

There are some other good features such as the three stage scrolling which adds to the perspective effect. Some of the baddies jump out from behind boulders or even out of the ground itself. Although there are a set number of creatures to fight, the freedom of movement means the process should never become repetitive or dull.



The Gremlin programming team left to right; Shaun Hollingworth, Peter Harrop, Marco Duroe and Chris Kerry — a 'quiet' bunch.

Now, in another game, that might be all you get but it seems that the Gremlin team got a little carried away with this one. The section above is actually only the first third of the game. It is also the only section to be completed at the time of writing. However, as most of the complex animation work had to be devised for this sequence, the rest of the game's development should not now take too long to implement. The second section is based on a single screen. Your character is nearing his goal and is crossing a log bridge near a lake when he attacked by more Ninjas. This time, they are armed with wooden poles (rather like those used in Kendo) but fortunately, so are you. The fight is made more difficult by the fact that you have to keep your balance on the log — otherwise things will get very wet...

All that had been programmed when I was there was the screen itself. It looked fantastic, however with a distant but graphically detailed pagoda in the background, it's delicate form gently reflected in the lake. One hell of a setting for a martial arts fight. When this is successfully completed, the climactic part of the game is reached. This consists of a bit of Katana wielding against some particularly evil Samurai warriors.

The Spectrum version is on schedule for intended release in February 86 and all machine versions of the game will be sold at around the ten pound mark which, from what I saw would appear to be a case of good value for money.

It seems strange that given the nature of the first game, Gremlin intend the second two of the series to be adventures. Even stranger considering they are negotiating with Adventure International for the subsequent games and AI are effectively in competition with them anyway with their Fighting Fantasy adaptations based on the Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone series. Nevertheless it's early days yet as far as *Way of the Tiger*'s sequels are concerned. In the meantime, I shall wait for the final version of this game to arrive and hope that the next time Roger draws me a map it bears a closer resemblance to reality than his previous effort. It's his frustrated imagination, you know. His desire to see that Newsfield journalists go where none have gone before. I just hope he gets better by the time he decides I'm worth sending to America...



WIN A SIGNED KIM RAYMOND ORIGINAL — OR BE "DOMARKED FOR LIFE"!

You could collect the original Artwork used in the Domark Ad on Page 30

Crash Competition

If you are a reader of 2000AD, then you'll no doubt be familiar with the work of Kim Raymond. He's one of the guys whose work appears regularly between the covers of your weekly dose of justice a la Dredd.

The chaps at Domark commissioned him to produce a short, full colour cartoon strip to use in the advertisement for *Gladiator*, their latest beat em up game. You could be the proud owner of the original signed artwork that was used in the advert on page 30 of this issue of CRASH if you enter this little comp. (You won't get the lettering though — someone else does those for cartoon artists and they are added at the printers . . .)

By way of consolation, to cheer up some of the people who don't actually win the competition outright, Domark are offering twenty of their delightful T Shirts which have the words "Domarked for Life" emblazoned (Lloyd Mangram's Long Word Dictionary) on the front. On the back, there's room to add your high scores too. Cunning idea, huh?

All you've got to do is study the two gladiatorial pictures that Oli has prepared for you to study, and work out how many differences there are between versions A and B. Ring round all the differences you can find in version A, complete the entry form with your name, address and T Shirt Size and send it winging off towards GLADIATOR COMP, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB to arrive by 27th February. First all correct answer out of the gladiator's shield on that day will secure the artwork for its sender, and the next twenty correct solutions to this knotty problem will win T Shirts.



NAME .... ADDRESS ....

.... SHIRT SIZE ....



Lloyd Mangram's HALL OF SLIME

So. A New Year starts and we have a veritable plethora (LMLWLD — ideal way to spend your Chrissy money from Auntie Doris) of slimesters. More good fun and gore to amuse and entertain you. Just imagine what we do to CHEATS! These are just snaps of dudes who send in their photos (more to mutilate, please, we're running low). Don't attempt to cheat or fates nastier that death lie in store — we've renewed our contract with the Ludlow Mafia, and have negotiated a special bulk discount rate for 1986. Be warned. Bye for now, my little lovelies . . .

CHEAT WAS HERE



Booty 119 pieces
Action Biker Completed 2 Minutes 58 secs
Exploding Fist 753,185
Frank Bruno Frenchie KO'd once
Bruce Lee Killed 35 wizards; score 2,000,370
Spy Hunter 378,495
Alien 8 12 chambers
Herbert's Dummy Run 92 Jelly babies
Shaun Macleod, Torquay, Devon

Knightlore Completed
Underwurlde Completed
Sabre Wulf Completed
Alien 8 12 Cyrogenic chambers
Nightshade 3 Major nasties killed
Exploding Fist 6th Dan
Trashman Widcombe Vale
Jet Set Willy Completed
Finders Keepers Completed
Skool Daze About 8,300
Booty 27 Pieces
Wanted Monty Mole Completed
Combat Lynx 25,605
Beach Head Completed
Raid Over Moscow Completed
Ian Broughton, Grinshill, Shrewsbury

Pyjamarama 100%
Hobbit Completed
Finders Keepers Escaped from castle
Bruce Lee Completed 5 times
Frankie 98% and 98,000 points
Rocky Horror Completed first go
Stop the Express Completed once
Airwolf 3 Scientists
Exploding Fist 10th Dan 110,800
Roger Dean, Leigh, Lancashire

Exploding Fist 312,500
Yie ar Kung Fu 579,000
Commando 233,650 area 11
Skool Daze 40,930
Starstrike 2,553,100
Mooncresta 42,130
Jason and Spencer Hart, Often Brimbles, Peterborough

Pyjamarama Completed 100%
Kokotoni Wilf Completed
Beach Head 80,950
Everyone's a Wally £2,740
Brian Bloodaxe 33,000
Sabre Wulf 90% Completed
Rocco Completed World Champion
Moon Alert Completed (No POKES!)
Wizard's Lair Completed
Herb's Dummy Run Completed
Popeye Completed
Starquake Completed 67%
Justin Finney, Shelton, Stoke-on-Trent

Nightshade 81% Completed 2,500,000
Alien 8 20 Chambers
Underwurlde 51% Completed 133,900
Sabre Wulf 100% Completed
Atic Atac 95% Completed
Avalon Completed, Minor Mystic
Dragontorc Completed 100% Supreme Lorelord
Wizard's Lair Completed 94% 299,000
Lords of Midnight Completed in 30 days
Doomdark's Revenge Completed in 6 days
Spy vs Spy 9,422 Grand Master Spy
Pyjamarama 92% Completed
Everyone's a Wally £2,740 Completed
Shadow of the Unicorn 20%
Tir Na Nog Completed
Ghostbusters 130,000
On the Run 40,000 and 3 flasks
Dark Star Completed 21,000
Deathstar Interceptor 212,000
Raid Over Moscow Completed 162,000
Beach Head 120,000 Completed
Bruce Lee Retired at 561,000 with 9 lives
Spy Hunter 1,122,000
Match Day Beaten computer on all levels
Hyper Sports 137,000
Jet Set Willy Completed
Manic Miner Completed
Full Throttle 1st at San Marno by 1.5 secs
Airwolf 0 Scientists
Julian Boyle, Addiscombe, Surrey

Jet Set Willy II 40 Objects
Atic Atac Nearly done with 67%
Shadowfire Done
Frank Bruno Frenchie
TLL 24,100
Spy Hunter 150,035 on expert
Highway Encounter 24,000
Starstrike 3D 1,050,210 on easy
Stuart Collyer, Neath, Wales.



Hobbit Completed
Starquake Completed
Beach Head Completed all levels
Elite Dangerous
Atic Atac Completed
Sabre Wulf Completed
Ghostbusters Completed
Jetpac Completed
Cookie Completed
Talisman Completed
Dambusters Completed all levels
Evil Dead Completed
Alchemist Mad Martha
Dragontorc Completed
Ian 'Mega' Finch, Paul Draper, Taff Pope.

Hypersports Swimming 25.92; Shooting 9200; Horse 9.99; Archery 4,000; Weights 210kg; Overall 201,138
Everyone's a Wally Completed, £2,790
Boulder Dash Completed on all levels
Chuckie Egg 228,360 level 25
Wheelie Level 8
Atic Atac Completed 69%
Manic Miner Completed
Monty Mole 17th screen
Nodes of Yesod 40%
Jet Set Willy Completed with infinite lives POKE
Frank Bruno Beaten boxers 1 2 3 4 & 5
Stuart Cragg, Spilsby, Lincs.

Frank Bruno's Boxing Frenchie
The Hobbit 17%
Way Of The Exploding Fist 7th Dan
Bruce Lee Completed so many times I've forgotten!
World Series Baseball 28-0 to me
Rocky Horror Show Completed
Super Cool Sudi, Ashton Under Lyne, Manchester

Galakians 11,090, 6 sheets
Jet Set Willy 77 items without pokes
Camelot Completed
Harrier Attack 32,750
Football Manager 2nd Division, won every year
Cookie Baked cake twice
Trans Am 2,960, 3 cups
Manic Miner Completed twice
Bruce Lee Completed 7 times
Psst Three flowers
David Goddard, Romford, Essex

Atic Atac Completed, 99%
Bruce Lee Completed 20 times: 1,083,725
Harrier Attack Completed 22,910
Booty 9 objects
Chuckie Egg 134,250, level 15
Cauldron Collected frog, 3,840
Ant Attack 8,072 rescued 5 girls
Fall Guy Level 6
Knight Lore 32%, 4 charms
Avalon Chief loreseeker
3D Starstrike 1,206,500 easy, 918,000 very hard
Paul Morgan, Horesforth, Leeds

Popeye Completed
Monty Mole Completed
Dynamite Dan 550, 3 sticks; 666 2 sticks
Mooncresta 35,300
Bugaboo Can't do it
Starion Space Admiral
Shadowfire Completed
Everyone's A Wally Completed, £2,590
Lunar Jetman 64,270
Tribble Trubble 520
Booty 39 objects
David Brothers, Farnborough, Hampshire

Technician Ted 5 tasks
Pyjamarama Completed, 97%
Jet Pac 92,850
Danger Mouse in Double Trouble Saved the world 8 times
Alien 8 24 chambers
Underwurlde Completed 38%
Manic Miner Level 19
Richard Wiltshire, Thornbury, Bristol

Starquake 260,880, Core elements 9, 67%, Completed 2.11pm 3rd November
Exploding Fist 27,000 6th Dan with 3 Yins
Starstrike 1,115,400, level 6, reached trench
Mooncresta 26,260
Beach Head Completed, 95,200
Highway Encounter Completed once, 2nd level, got lasertron to zone 10
The Rats 42% (had to load side B), Harris killed in second encounter, in classroom
Alien Parker killed, Ripley Killed, Alien destroyed, competence rating, 76%
Skool Daze 28,180, Gone up a year, 9 shields again, 5,900 lines, caught mumps
Decathlon javelin, 122.78m
S A Levette, Calbourne, Isle of Wight



Complete Your Gargoyle Collection When You Subscribe

GGG GGGGOLLY G GGG GOSH G GARGOYLE G G GAMES!

This month, if you subscribe, there's a choice of two freebies: you can pick up *Dun Darach* totally gratis, or go for a copy of *Tir Na Nog* AND a copy of the Oldy but Goldy, classic shoot em up, *Ad Astra*. An ideal chance to complete your collection of Gargoyle Games and subscribe at the same time.

DUN DARACH
This game won the highest overall rating in the history of CRASH, collecting 97% in Issue 18 last year. You take on the role of Cuchulainn, the celtic hero as he stumps around the hamlet of Dun Darach avoiding thieves, trading with shopkeepers and solving puzzles.

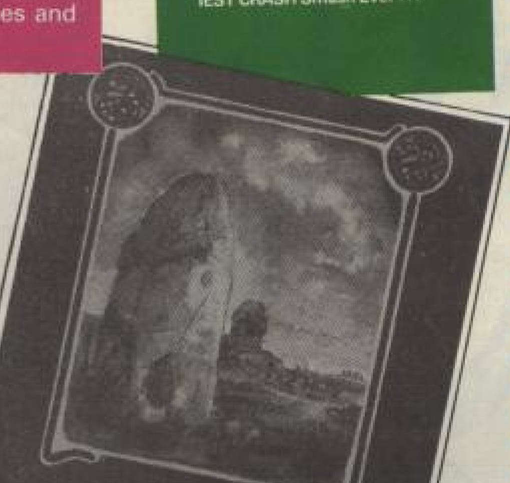
Your pal Loeg has been ab ducted by the evil temptress Skar and it's up to you to complete the tasks that lie before you in the city of Dun Darach so that you can find out what's happened. Walking through the city, you come across a whole host of characters with whom you have to interact in order to complete your quest.

Hours and hours of fun lie before you with the SMASH IEST CRASH Smash Ever . . .

TIR NA NOG
The hero Cuchulainn is called upon to find the four segments of the Seal of Calum, piece them together and thereby prevent the Great Enemy from spreading evil across the land. In the game, which takes the form of an interactive adventure with occasional arcade sequences, you are up against the Sidhe — a race of sub-human beasts.

There are puzzles to be solved, and there's lots of exploring to do in the land of Tir Na Nog . . . a CRASH Smash, naturally





AD ASTRA
A classic shoot em up from the annals of CRASHistory. A space combat game with 3D solid graphics in which you have to try to survive seven phases each with twenty segments. And just to make your life that bit harder (well, without a challenge, where would you be?), there's a screenful of asteroids hurtling towards you every time you lose a life and at the start of each phase.

Can your joystick stand the strain? Can you?



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Don't fret. We can offer you the same choice of games. If you want DUN DARACH you can have it for £5.00 — almost half price, and if your choice is TIR NA NOG **and** AD ASTRA then you're getting an even better financial deal.

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OR

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DUN DARACH

TIR NA NOG and AD ASTRA

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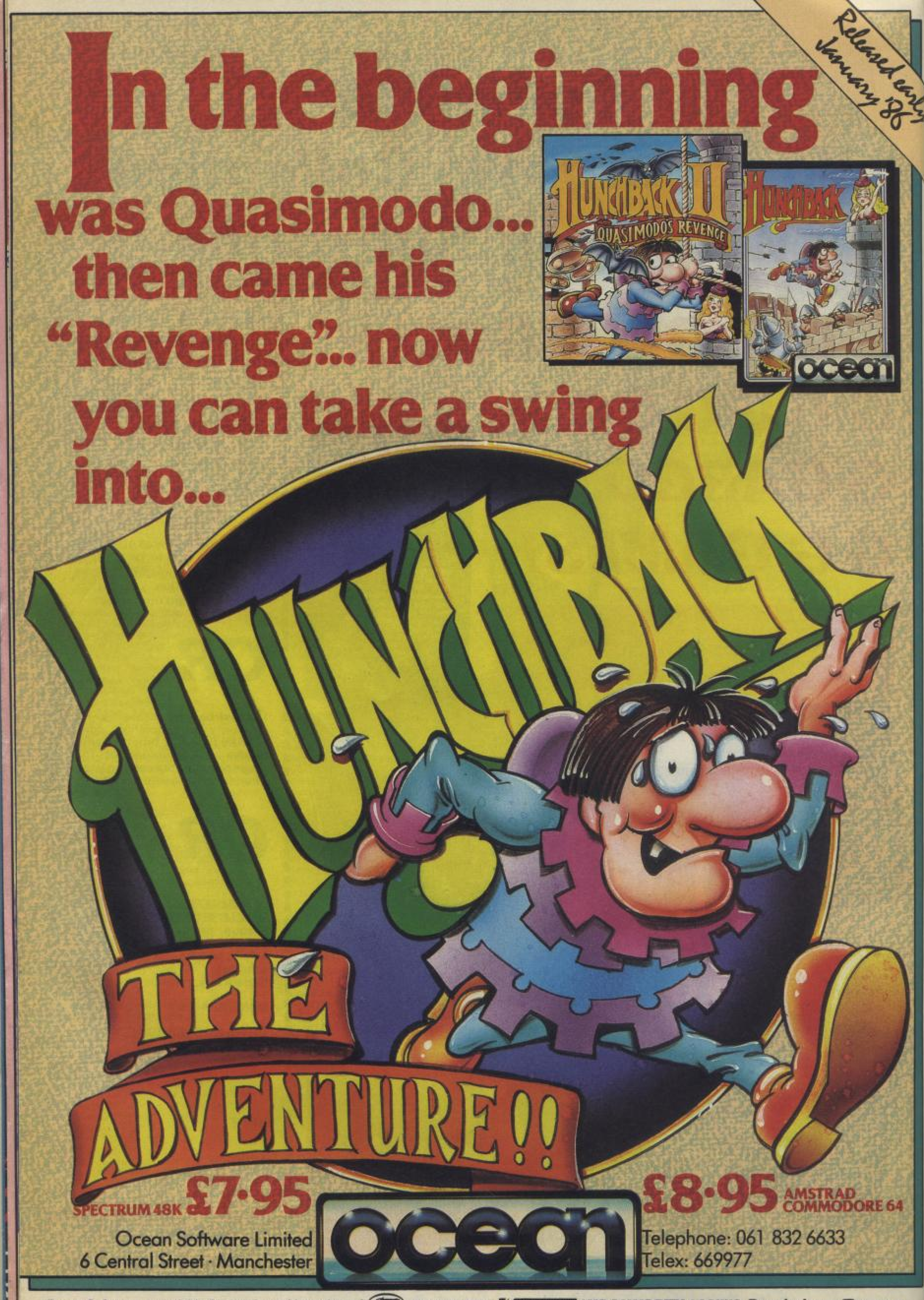
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Released early January '86
In the beginning was Quasimodo... then came his "Revenge"... now you can take a swing into...
HUNCHBACK II
QUASIMODO'S REVENGE
HUNCHBACK
ocean
HUNCHBACK
THE ADVENTURE!!
SPECTRUM 48K £7·95
£8·95 AMSTRAD COMMODORE 64
ocean
Ocean Software Limited
6 Central Street · Manchester
Telephone: 061 832 6633
Telex: 669977

PREVIEW

ARC — OFF AT A TANGENT . . .

After a very quiet 1985, Thor, 'father' of Odin (although mythologically speaking it's the other way around), has returned to the Spectrum software scene, with Arc of Yesod, **the follow-up to Odin's highly successful** Nodes of Yesod. **Unfortunately, the Spectrum version isn't quite complete, but here's a taste of things to come — a preview based on the Commodore 64 version . . .**

And before you get all moralistic about previewing games on other machines, we have got a Spectrum demo from which the screen shots were taken — so there.



Gosh! Golly! Cripes! Charles is really in a fix! He'd better watch out for the exploding red chicken on top of the transporter to the far right and the evil red zombie spaceman moving in for the kill (well, crystals) from the bottom of the screen. The blue thingy to the far left is an alien Droid.



A not so hi-tech cavern, exquisitely decorated in shades of blue, green, yellow and white. A crystal sits provocatively atop the platform next to Charles, who is not exposing himself to the oncoming aliens, but has just released the Sphere (far left).

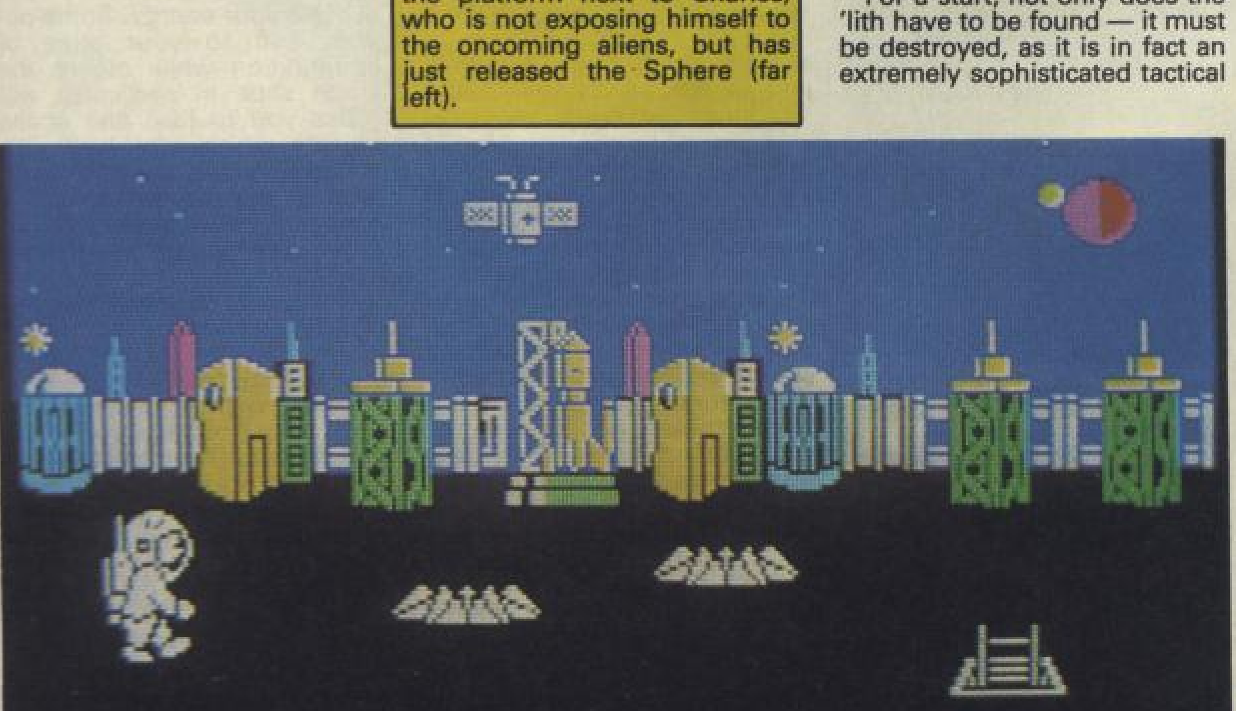
The Rt Hon Charlemagne Fotheringham (but you can call me Grunes Charles) is back and is once again in search of that mysterious black slab — the Monolith. This time the quest for the 'lith (that's trendy spaceman's terminology for a Monolith) takes place on the planet Ariat, which, despite certain graphical differences, bears a remarkable similarity to the Moon in Charles' first adventure — as do the inhabitants of the planet, the Ariatans. But this is neither here nor there for it is the game itself that matters. And thankfully there are some noticable changes that make *Arc of Yesod* a little bit more than a deluxe *Nodes of Yesod*.

For a start, not only does the 'lith have to be found — it must be destroyed, as it is in fact an extremely sophisticated tactical warfare Computer, containing information which could lead to the destruction of the Earth if it fell into the wrong hands. And should the Ariatans get to it before Charles . . .

Of course, things are not so easy for our intrepid explorer — the majority of the aliens are out to drain Charles of all his energy, while one foul creature disorientates him by inverting his controls! There are a multitude of teleports scattered about the caverns, along with many hidden passages and disappearing patches of floor.

To aid him on his mission, Charles is in possession of a small 'Sphere' which functions much the same as the mole in *Nodes*, only this baby can fire left or right and is capable of blowing away chunks of wall and most aliens. He also has a limited number of 'Smart Bombs', which, when activated, have the same effect as the Gravity Sticks in *Nodes*, preventing some of the aliens materialising for a short period of time.

Right, that's it — full review next month . . .



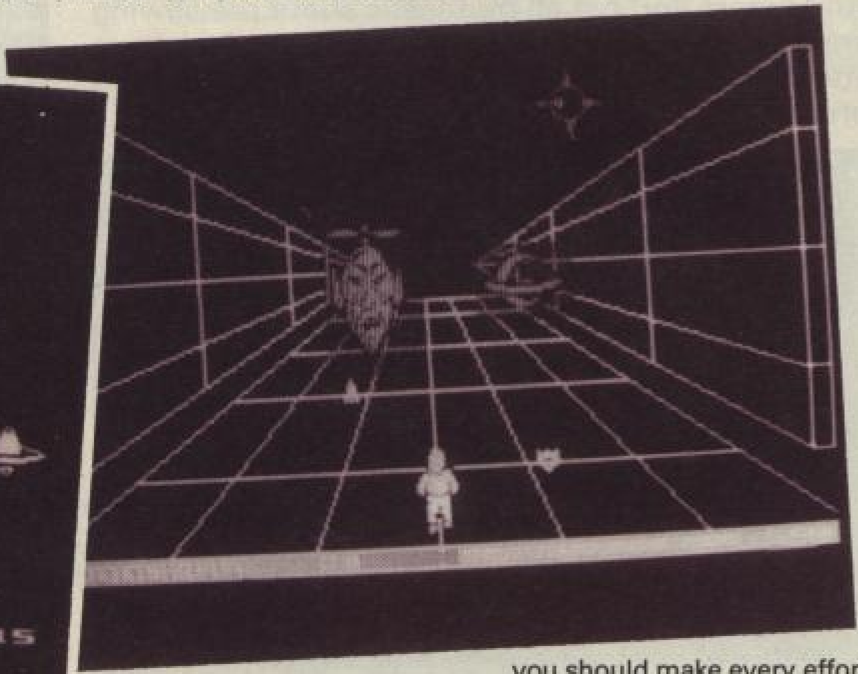
Charles (far left) taking a stroll on the hi-tech (that's trendy spaceman's terminology for 'high-technology') surface of the planet Ariat, with an obscure red planet hanging tastefully in the right hand corner of the blue night sky. A ladder to the far right leads ominously down into the darker depths . . .

TWISTING THE FRIGHT AWAY

If, like us, you had been puzzled by the significance of the scantily clad dancers employed by Mark Cale on **System 3**'s stand at the PCW show, you might also have been searching for the meaning that their presence might have had. At the time, we all thought it was just a cheap trick to pull the crowds. In fact, what Mr Cale was really demonstrating was the ease with which the human mind receives such spectacles. The demonstration served to hi-light the naughty little thoughts that pass through some peoples minds . . .

Well, the subject of Mr. Cale's latest game makes sense of the entire performance. *Twister, Mother of Harlots* is about evil, sin and general naughtiness. Elements of badness that manifest themselves within the minds of weak and wretched humans: Twister is the motivating force, the root of all evil, the rotten core that can live within the human mind. The object of the game is to remove this evil from the human conscience — travelling through the mind of a person which has been made a home by Twister, you have to avoid a variety of evil thoughts and demons on your way to the final showdown with Twister.









The game takes place over six screens, most of which place you in a forward-scrolling 3D playing area. The first screen has little platforms, resembling Victory V lozenges, which scroll towards you forcing you to move forward by jumping from one to the other. The second screen replaces the platforms with a tunnel, the sides having grid patterns to give the effect of you moving down it. On this screen you can position your man on either the floor or the roof, depending on which area is most threatened by demons. The third screen is similar but without the roof. The fourth screen takes you into a different environment where you don a jet pack and zoom around in space. The penultimate screen returns you to the scrolling roadways — only this time there are no sides and no roof. If you survive these four screens, you are finally confronted by Twister, in the form of an evil serpent-like creature coiled around a planet in the centre of the screen . . .

As you travel through this Twister-infected mind, you are attacked by a squad of demons, which have been sent out by Twister to hinder your progress. Each demon type has its own particular pattern of movement and will attempt to bump into you in order to deplete your energy reserves. You are equipped with a Demon Gun, which comes in handy for removing nasties from your path — but ammunition needs to be collected, as your gun is not self-replenishing.

Each time you kill three demons of the same type, they will drop a useful object which you should make every effort to collect. Apart from the objects which must be collected, and the demons, which must not, there are a number of other objects which move towards you. Some will reward you with some additional energy, others will deplete your energy. Some objects add to your store of ammunition while others, the horse shoe in particular, will cause you to lose one of the objects which you have just collected. Once you have gathered up the required collection of objects from a screen, you can move onto the next stage of the game.

On the final screen it's time to do battle with the root of all evil Twister itself. The serpent-like creature is coiled around what appears to be a planetoid. Its neck lashes out into space and you have to plant a well-aimed shot into its open mouth to deliver the coup de grace.

The graphics employed throughout the game are really very effective, being both detailed and smooth. The title screen and high score table have some very pretty effects — in fact the game seems to have a great deal more promise than System 3's previous release *International Karate* and judging by the early copy we caught sight of, the final version should prove to be a first class shoot em up. Perhaps Mr. Cale might send along his dancing troop to help us understand the full significance of the ideas portrayed within the game?



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LITTLE AND ROUND, WITH NO SHARP EDGES



When Microsphere collected another CRASH Smash, it was time to send ace investigative reporter, Charles P Cohen along to see the dynamic duo of Helen and David Reidy. They came to see us, while Skool Daze **was nearly finished, and spent the day taking us round the classrooms while their car was being attended to by the Ludlow Car Doctor. It was Walpurgisnacht (Halloween to most of us) when Charles P set off on his trek across London . . .**

T'was the eve of Halloween. Looking carefully about I pulled my coat closer around me and warily approached the building. In the orange glow of the street lamps and the silver moon I pressed the bell. A woman opened the door, and, summoning up my courage I said "Hello. I'm from CRASH. I'm here to do the interview. You are **Microsphere** aren't you?"

She smiled. On Halloween, a smile means many things.

"Yes", she said, "I'm Helen. Please come in."

So I left the night to its own devices, and stepped into the Microsphere.

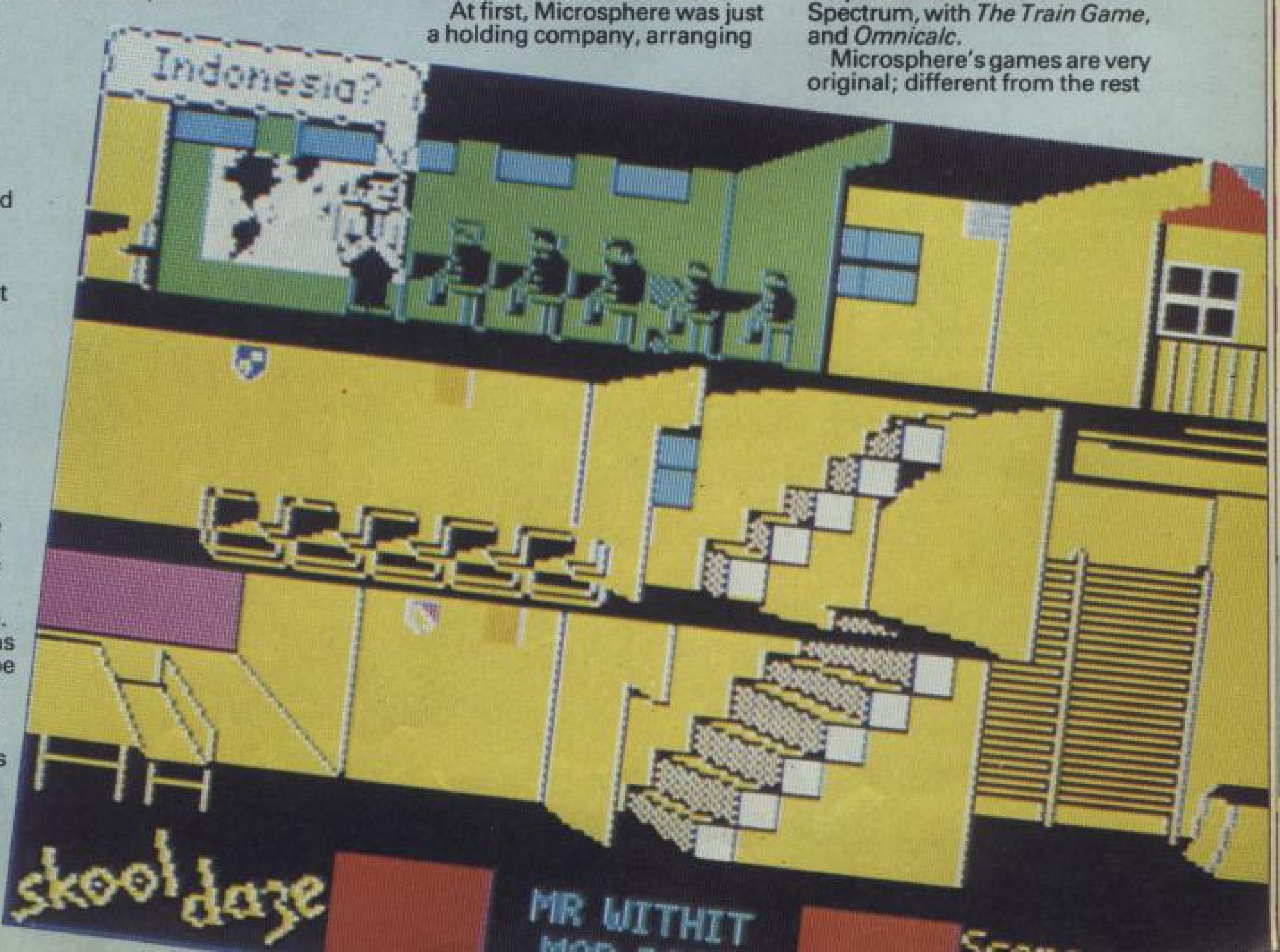
Microsphere is a husband and wife team who have been writing some of the most original and lasting games for the Spectrum since the year dot (1982 actually), when the machine was launched. These veterans of the industry have brought us such gems as *Wheelie*, *Skyranger*, *The Train Game*, and the incomparable *Skool Daze* with its follow-up *Back to Skool* — their latest CRASH Smash. In early 1983 they also branched out into the serious software market, when Dave wrote *Omnicalc* — one of the first and best pro spreadsheets for the Spectrum. If the Spectrum had caught on as a business machine then maybe Dave and Helen would now be the premier business software company . . . But then maybe CRASH wouldn't exist. Perhaps things are best left as they are.

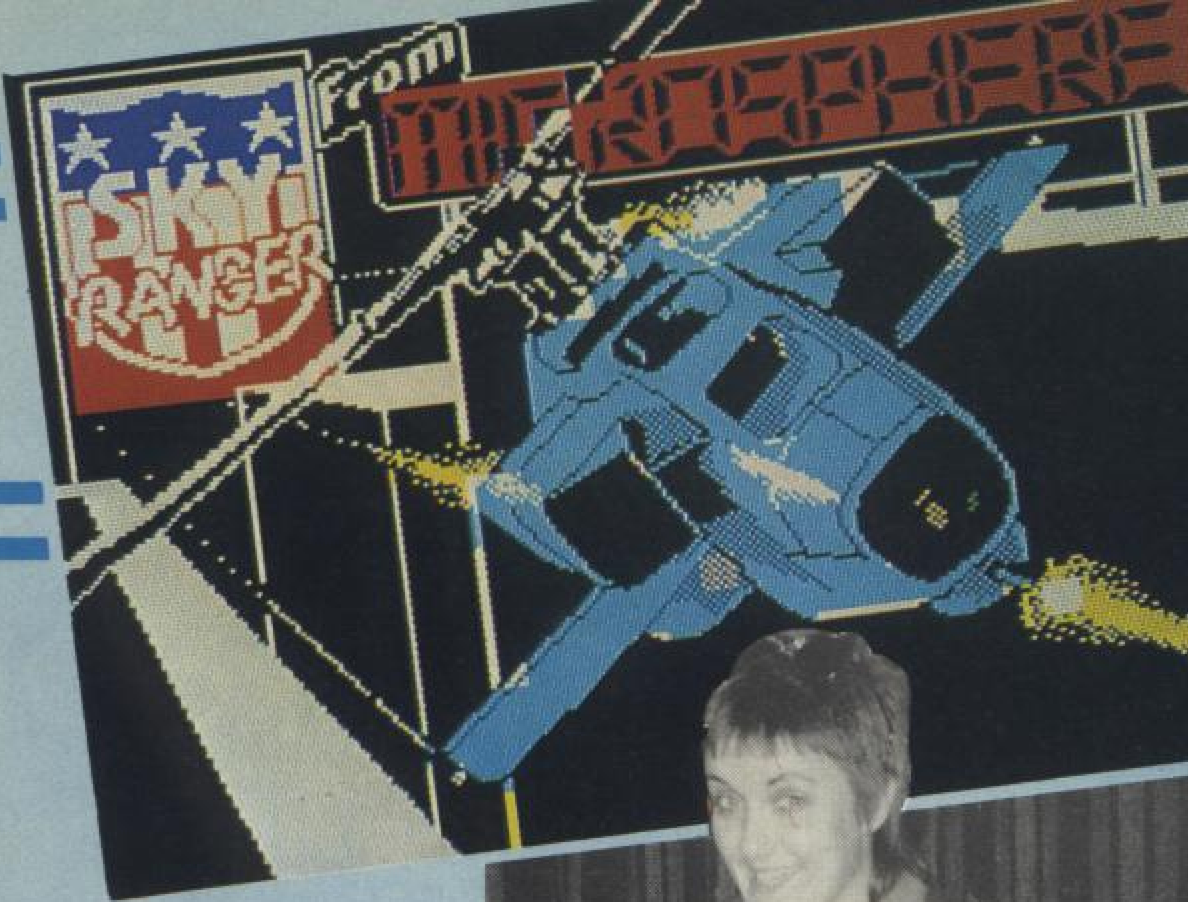
Microsphere was set up in 1982 as a casual arrangement, while Dave was working as a system analyst and Helen was working as a Primary School teacher.

Naming the company was their first major task. Those were the days when any respectable software producer had 'Micro' in its name. "Microsphere" seemed to encompass all that the company represented — little, and round with no sharp edges. What's more, **Microsphere** sounds a bit more plausible than "Hyper Mega Micro Big Ad Budget Crummy Games Software Inc Ltd VIP".

At first, Microsphere was just a holding company, arranging sub contracts for hardware manufacturers (Translation: Microchip maker's middle man), and this also allowed Dave to do some freelance work for other people. Soon, however, seeing a market for high quality and cheap software for Clive's baby, they branched out into the Spectrum, with *The Train Game*, and *Omnicalc*.

Microsphere's games are very original; different from the rest





of the market. This may have something to do with the way Dave works. He doesn't play anyone else's games — just reads about them in CRASH. What's more, he doesn't use an Assembler or any other conveniences like that. I asked him, Don't you get many bugs?

"Oh no", he replied, "Only one or two little ones here and there". He writes the code out on paper first, and then Helen keys it all into the computer (aaah). The planning stage for games is understandably very long — especially with the *Skool* games, which require oodles of complex interaction. In *Back to Skool* for instance, there are thirty-two independent characters, all doing their own thing.

Talking of Helen, she's given up full-time kiddie bashing (sorry — teaching) and now organises most of the administration, such as licking stamps, writing letters, liaising with buyers from the chain stores and taking care of minor matters, such as keying in programs. These daze, she only teaches once a week, to keep her hand in. The idea for *Skool Daze* stemmed from Helen's experiences: Dave and Helen then sat down with the basic idea and dreamt up a whole range of "Extra Curricular" activities that skoolkids get up to — the whole point of the games is to commit all these grievous crimes and get away with it.

Microsphere plan to continue their original approach to games design: there are no plans to get involved with licensing deals, for instance. Helen believes that professionalism is very important these days, and she and David agree that licensing is a bad thing for Spectrum gaming, because it is generally used as an excuse for publishing crummy games and clocking up a nice little profit.

Neither Helen nor Dave feel that they are particularly well blessed with artistic capabilities. So they have this professional artist fellow, Keith Warrington, who comes in and does all the graphics for them. (He teaches, too, so there's a fund on background information to dra\ on for the *Skool* games.) The Turbo Load is all theirs, thoug, and they spend many hours checking every batch of tapes. Reliability is a strong concern at Microsphere, and they are only happy with a 99.9% success rate on duplicated games.

A lot of Helen's time is spent "running round in cirles, chasing people and being chased". Quite a few people write letters to Helen you know. She tries to provide personal replies to as many as she can, but everyone gets an answer of some sort . . . once she gave lines to a correspondent for being impertinent. Can't win, can you?

With large companies getting more and more involved with the home computer software market, doesn't life get difficult for the small independent software house? "It's certainly more of a struggle", Helen admitted, "there's more hassle involved. Not so long ago, buyers from the large chain stores were happy to take half-decent software from anyone. Nowadays it seems they're more concerned with your advertising budget and the size of your box — it's very difficult to get a good game from a small software house into the large stores."

The market has changed radically over the past couple of years. "I loved the happy jumble sale atmosphere of the early Microfairs", Helen admitted, "With the large companies entering the market and making a name for themselves with blanket advertising in the magazines and TV coverage, things have changed quite radically. There's no way we can afford to approach selling games that way, but we're doing well enough."

Microsphere has no plans to expand. Licensing deals are simply not considered, and while Dave and Helen have no shortage of good game ideas the number of hours available to them in any given day tends to limit their output to a couple of games a year. "We won't be taking on programmers so we can get bigger — we're happy where we are now", Helen explained.

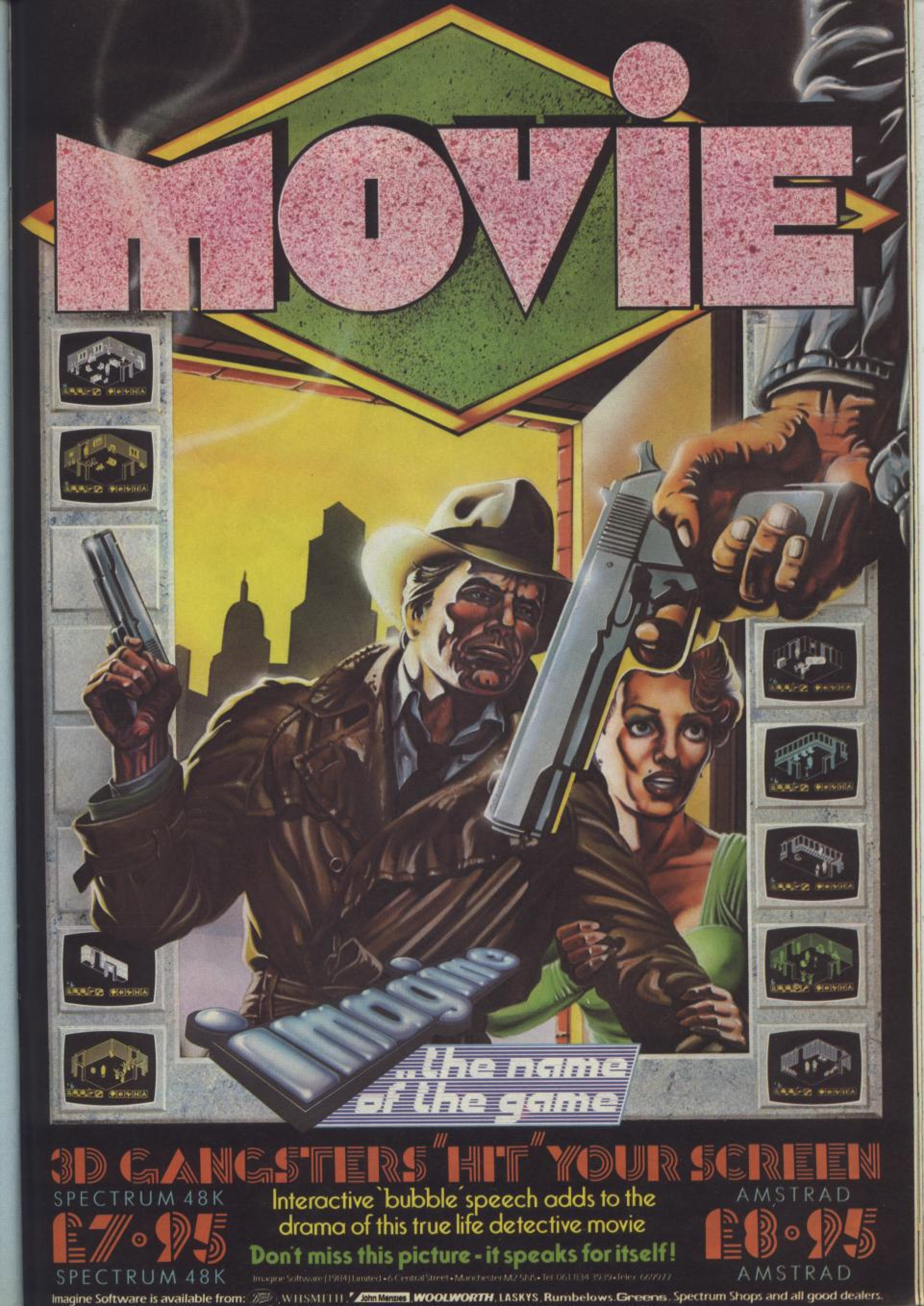
But wait! There is more. I can exclusively reveal that not only are Microsphere releasing a new game at Easter, ("If you have your wits about you, you should be able to work out the title" Dave said.) Furthermore, *Back to Skool* is the second program in a trilogy. Yes, more bad spelling and late nights next summer! Gosh. Clues to the new Skool game are hidden in *BTS*, so get looking.

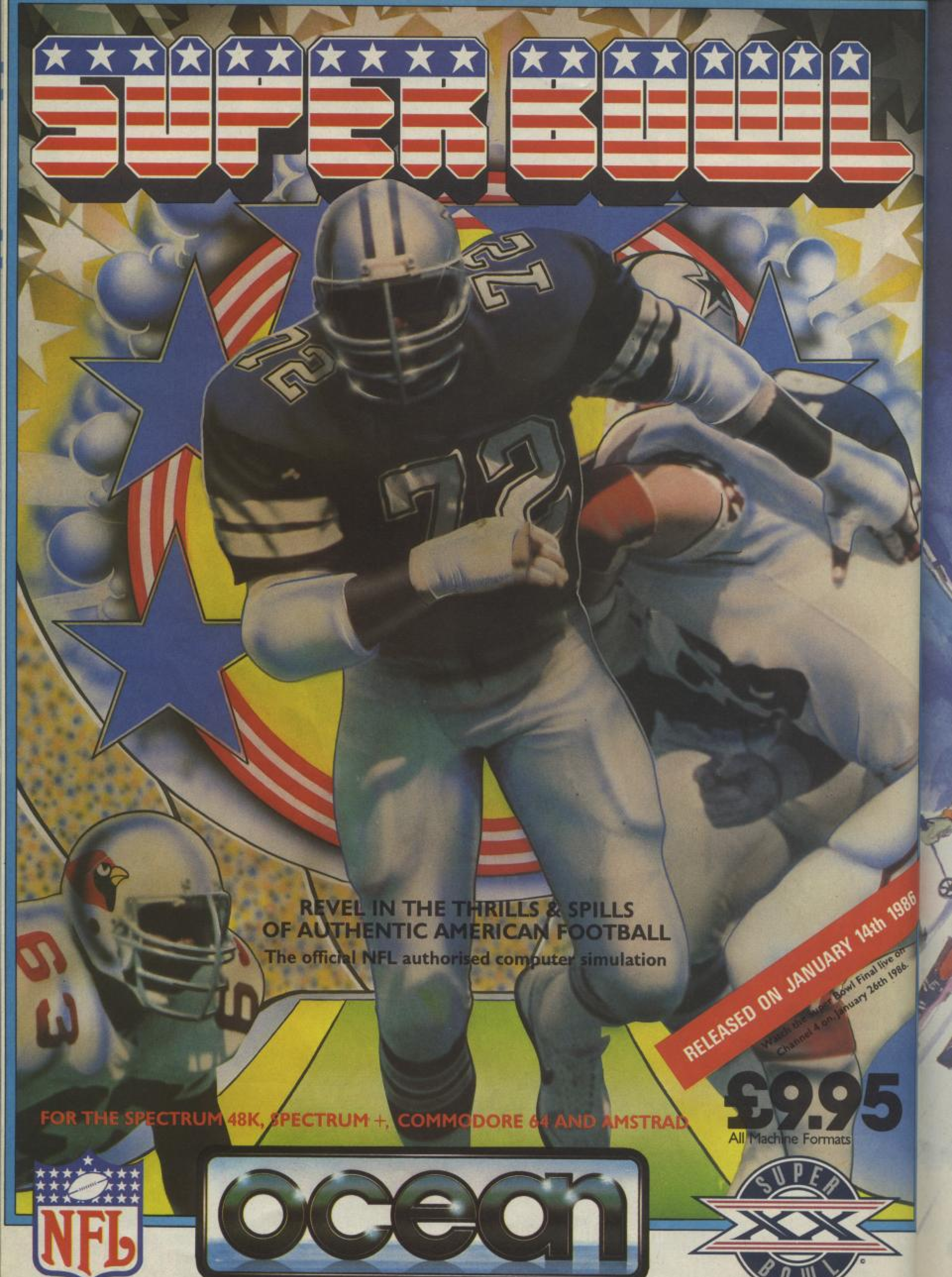


Helen Reidy in the Efficient Administrator Pose. Note the Biarritz-style of spectacle-wearing and the nonchalant lean on some railings.

"I'd draw a moustache on Dave's picture, too, but I drew one on him years ago", Helen adds.




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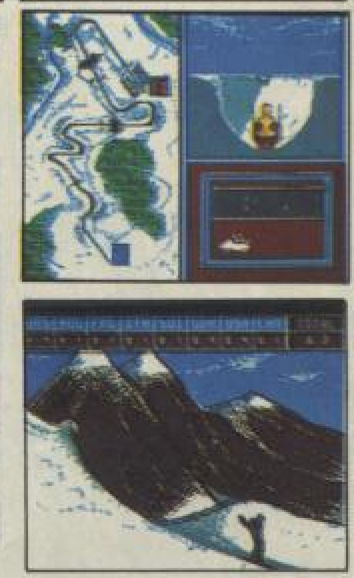

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PULL THE OTHER ONE

It's hard to get through any day without having a laugh. Humour comes from reading the strip cartoon in the newspaper on a morning, hearing the gossip in the pub at lunchtime, or perhaps simply chuckling in wonderment at how someone can keep churning out a program so fundamentally boring as Newsnight every evening and get away with it.

In software, humour is the flavour of the moment. Arcade games with flapping toilet seats have given way to the medium where humour can have full rein, within the copious text of the adventure. I suppose the first humorous adventures came from Runesoft (with *Spoof*) and Delta 4 with *Return of the Joystick*. *Denis Through the Drinking Glass* was an hilarious send up of the PM's hubby while a little later the Lever & Jones team were serving up their first satire entitled *Hampstead*, noteworthy for its cutting humour. Their follow up, *Terrormolinos*, describing a less than fun-packed package holiday in the sun, wasn't as subtle but still got all its digs in at the right places. It seems more and more people were looking for something beyond the cliched dragon bashing and universe saving. Fergus McNeil's Delta 4 had a chart success with his Silversoft-marketed *Bored of the Rings*, a spoof on Tolkien's Lord of the Rings. *Adrian Mole* has the sharpest comments of them all, and what's more, is very well-written having borrowed much from the super book by Sue Townsend. 1986 will bring along a lot more humour, of that we can be sure.

NOT SO FAST

An increasing number of companies are using their own loading systems for Spectrum games. The aim of these systems is to make the program almost impossible to copy. A system in common use at the moment is centred around the idea that programs which load at high speeds are more difficult to copy. The sad point about this idea is that the programs are also more difficult to load (and for precisely the same reasons).

One of the beauties of the Spectrum is its tolerance towards all manner of programs when it comes to loading. Any average cassette player can do the job. Not so with these new fast loader programs; a player needs fine tuning facilities to load them. Recent examples of games using curious loading systems are *Never Ending Story*, *Mindshadow*, *Runestone* and *Lord of the Rings*. The first three use fast loaders while *Lord of the Rings* has a curious system whereby it does use the normal Spectrum loading speed but the first six parts are irrelevant it seems, and the computer must ignore three sections before the program actually starts to load. The least you would expect is a warning yet all you get is a directive to consult the Spectrum manual. Do this and you would conclude the game wasn't loading. If my experiences are anything to go by I can see these companies suffering from a high number of returns.

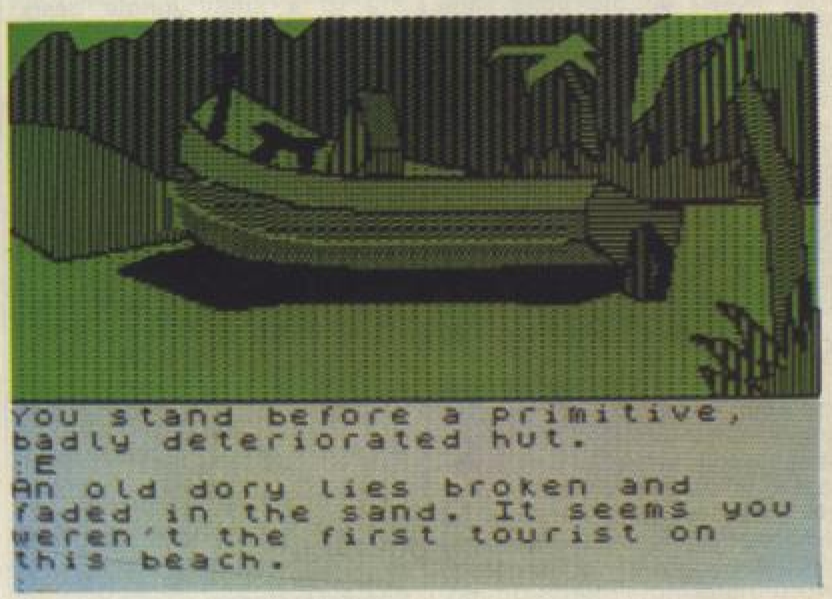
MINDSHADOW

Producer: Activision
Price: **£7.99**
Language: **machine code**
Authors: **Interplay Productions**

A CRASH Smash

You might wonder at times why I place so much editorial comment in reviews. There is a simple reason for this. If I were just to keep to saying 'yes', 'no', or 'maybe' about games this column would become tedious in the extreme. *Mindshadow* is an awfully good program, there's no doubting that. But what I would like to comment on is its lacklustre marketing, and perhaps, theme. I mean to say, when you have the likes of *Robin of Sherwood*, *Sherlock*, and *Lord of the Rings* knocking around with their immediate hookability, is it really enough just to throw a game at the public with the following spiel "lost in the middle of nowhere. In the middle of a mystery. Who are you? Where will you go? What will you do? London. Luxembourg. You struggle for answers, your identity, and for the faceless betrayer who left you to perish"?

As you may be aware, everyone who hasn't 'made it' and settled into the placid waters of The Civil Service must become a small business. This generally entails either clothing, feeding or entertaining those who work in the public sector and the buzz word for success is USP: the unique selling point which will give your business the edge over the competition. (Of course this country really needs small businesses to create wealth, like manufacturing or new technology — but no-one's told the bank managers who give respectability a bad name). Anyhow, I digress. The point is where on earth is the unique selling point in this product? There isn't one.



Having said all that above, this ▶



program really is good and commercial and knocks spots off the opposition. 'Good' because it sports many classy features like a superb tutorial which provides a marvellous introduction to playing adventures and includes an adventure simulation taking you through the step by step thinking behind the moves, GET ALL and DROP ALL, a strong EXAMINE command, QUICKSAVE and QUICKLOAD which allows saving within RAM, and a HELP ME CONDOR command which can be used three times when all else fails (Condor is the bird which featured in that superb BBC program set in South America). Unlike the idiotic, condescending quips of so many disappointing rivals this game's HELP function is truly superb. When you ask for help, help is exactly what you get. How this game has ticked all the boxes and managed to get every last sophisticated feature into 48K will leave the opposition scratching their heads for some time to come. 'Commercial' because it has a superb picture at each location, very well-designed and drawn. Rivals will be particularly impressed by the subtle use of colour and shading to give the graphics a very distinctive flavour. Whoever designed the graphics certainly deserves a pat on the back.

Play-wise this game is in a different league to most I review, with a friendly vocabulary and logical problems which are not too difficult to solve. It is one of those pleasant adventures where effort is directed towards problem solving rather than word-matching. This is in no small way due to the game's origins, as spellings and grammar point to an American source. A dory in one of the first few frames turns out to be an American word for boat (a flat-bottomed boat with a high bow and stern).

Although much of what I've said concerning this game is complimentary there still remains one area where it knocks the opposition for six. The program's intelligent responses to anything you might care to input is truly staggering when compared to the poor and inadequate 'You Can'ts' of its rivals. Take these (by no means the best) examples. In the first frame on the beach you can pick up the shell and LISTEN SHELL which elicits 'You hear Lorne Greene narrating an ocean series!'. North and east to the dory EXAM DORY gives 'The boat is obviously quite old. Its frame of rotten wood and rusted steel is all that remains'. GET STEEL doesn't just give the obligatory OK but the following 'You strip a solid chunk of steel off the skeleton of the boat'. EXAM STEEL now gives another variation! 'Although slightly rusted, the steel is in pretty good shape'. To the east, in the clearing of a small jungle oasis, EXAM VINE gives a different response after you have picked a vine. In other words the program is always aware of what you have done and keeps the responses intelligent. This is adventuring at its best and if you don't see this one you will be the loser.

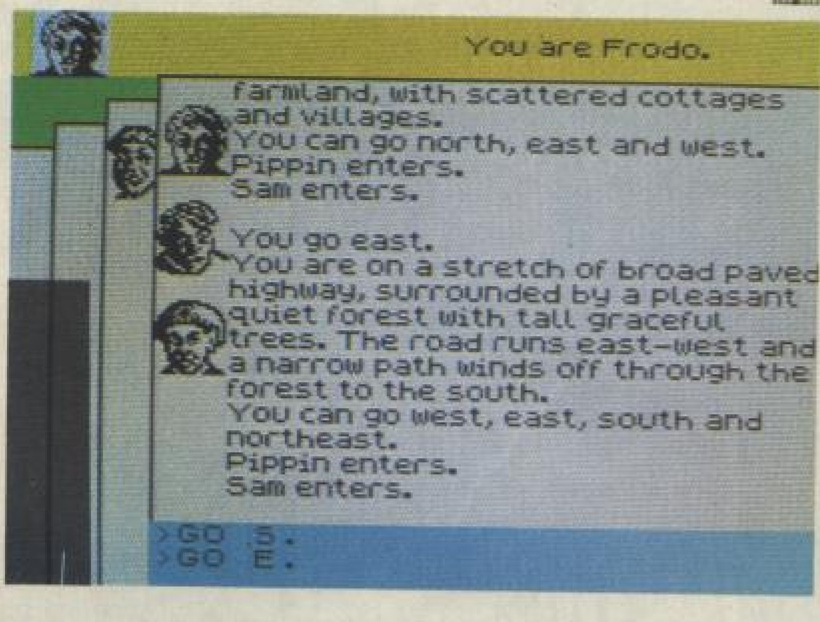


COMMENTS

Difficulty: straightforward
Graphics: very impressive and a new distinctive style
Presentation: good-looking
Input facility: some way beyond verb/noun
Response: very fast
Special features: superb tutorial intro to adventuring and useful HELP function
General rating: excellent

Atmosphere	9
Vocabulary	10
Logic	9
Addictive quality	9
Overall	**9**

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

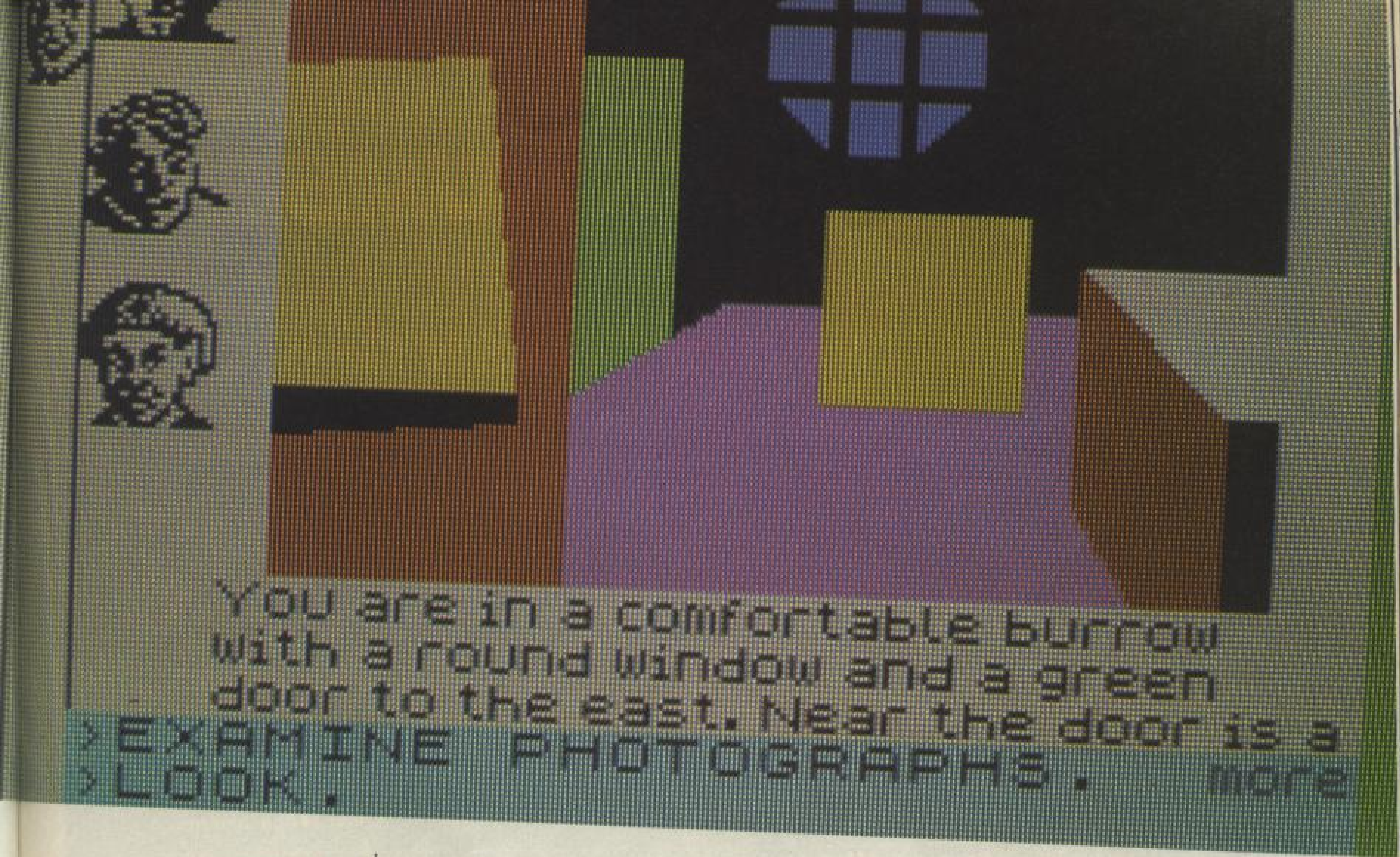


The Hobbit, published by Melbourne House, was, and still is, one of the best adventures ever released on a microcomputer. Not only was the program way ahead of its time but the theme was as familiar to the games-playing world as it possibly could be, dealing as it did with the famous fantasy book by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien published in 1937.

The Hobbit describes the adventures of a hobbit named Bilbo who finds a magic ring in the caves where a nasty creature called Gollum lives out its irksome existence. Melbourne House's latest adventure release is based upon JRR Tolkien's greatest work, *The Lord of the Rings*, a huge fantasy novel composed of three parts: *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King*. Due to the immense size of these works and the complexity of the programs the very first release comprises only the first part, *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

With this first game you receive a copy of Tolkien's book, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, two cassettes each bearing both a full program, and a beginner's game on the flip side, along with the indispensable and lucidly written guide to play. In this first part of the trilogy you guide Frodo, Bilbo's heir, and the hobbits Merry, Sam and Pippin on their way east to Rivendell. The task is made difficult by the sinister Black Riders, the Nazgul Ring-Wraiths who serve the Dark Lord Sauron. Hobbits are not particularly brave creatures and so must rely upon their uncanny knack of avoiding trouble by seeking the routes least likely to cause gossip, all the while looking for the chance of rest and comfort with friendly folk.







In terms of style the program very much resembles *The Hobbit* using the language termed Inglish, a rather full but straightforward subset of English. In appearance, however, the game is markedly different what with the layering effect used to represent the notebook pages of each character. A great departure this — you can play either of the four main characters, Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin and, so long as you remember to chose their options at the start, can interchange freely during the game. Due to its complexity the game also plays a little slower but my reason for delaying the review until next month is a little more prosaic — I simply couldn't get it to load, or rather, thought I couldn't get it to load due to the most curious of loading systems which would seem to consist of several repetitions of redundant code followed by the actual program.

This promises to be one of the biggest games of 1986.

(a preview of Lord of the Rings)

TIME QUEST

Producer: Scorpio
Price: **£1.99**
Language: **Quill**
Author: **B J Curtis**

It is the year 2997 and the world has become dependent upon nuclear energy. Vast banks of computers negotiate the world's business. People are relaxed and carefree and work of a manual nature is a thing of the past. The nations are united and there is no Nuclear Threat. Long ago man removed nuclear weapons and hid them in the corridors of time, their location a total secret.

Those who knew of the secret location of these weapons in time have long since died but one man now seeks to disrupt the world's tranquility. He seeks the awesome weapons to hold the world to ransom keeping the peoples of the world under a dark veil of fear. This man, a former top NASA scientist, has created a machine to negotiate the frontiers of time. Edmund Madison, the name behind the threat, has already commenced his search for the hidden weapons of war and it is up to you, armed with a so far untried Time Pursuit Vehicle, to stop him. Your task, therefore, is to search the frontiers of time and locate Madison and his craft.

Needless to say, the above drivel wasn't written by me; you can expect to see these instructions on loading up the first part. I must admit, although the writing style isn't so hot, the storyline is at least coherent. Gamesplay consists of shooting around four time zones imaginatively labelled A, B, C, and D, which have a more than familiar ring to them having played the likes of *Eureka!* (which you can now pick up a bit cheaper for obvious reasons).

The most striking features of this game are the abysmally poor pictures squeezed into a small area at the top of the screen. Fair enough, this program retails at £1.99 but it's almost as if someone had gone out of their way to design some really disappointing and worthless representations of your current location. Honestly, it would be better to leave graphics out if they are going to be as poor as this. Not all is hopeless, however, as the program makes good use of the Spectrum colours and the problems are no better or worse than many types I have witnessed in more expensive games. Not bad for £1.99 — but remember to pick up the laser gun lying in the Time Lab as it seems to disappear after a warp if you don't.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: easy
Graphics: abysmal
Presentation: colourful text
Input facility: verb/noun
Response: very fast, as all *Quill*ed games
General rating: cheap way of passing your time

Atmosphere	6
Vocabulary	7
Logic	6
Addictive quality	6
Overall	**6**

RUNESTONE

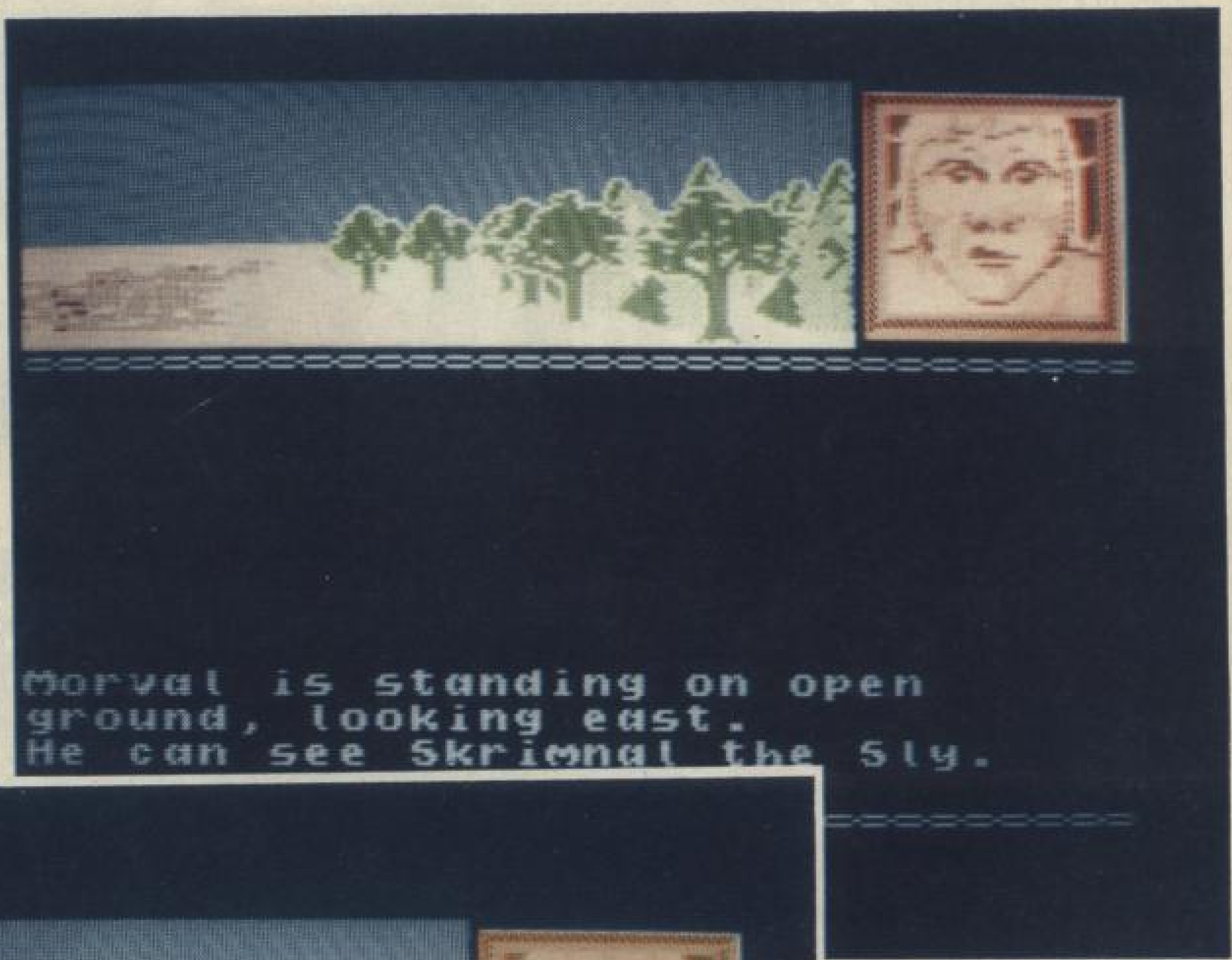
Producer: Firebird
Price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Alan Davis**

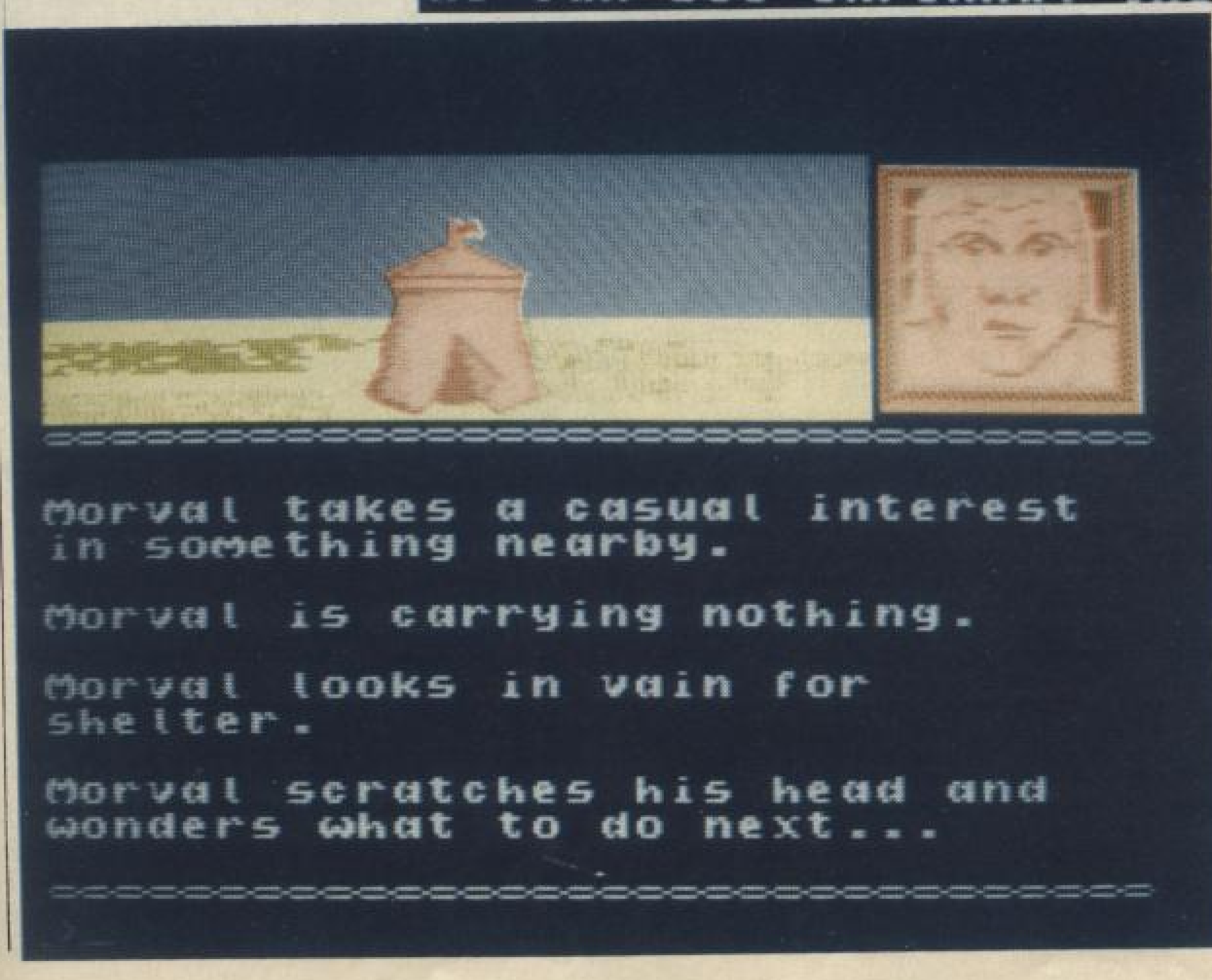
Now here's a curiosity. *Runestone* was Smashed in June and here it is again to remind you all of what a great program it is. Games Workshop were the instigators of the game then, but now Firebird have taken up the challenge and delivered a slightly changed version. The chief differences are an increase in speed, brought about by machine coding all the routines, and a sprucing up of presentation.

Runestone is basically a cross between the landscaping of *Midnight* and the text input of *The Hobbit*. It combines real-time action, a full text interpreter, multiple command input, dozens of independent characters and thousands of views from a great number of locations. You control three heroes in their main quest to crush Kordomir the Dark One, hopefully retrieving the long lost Runestone of Zaphir in the process. But in this we meet one of the many strengths of the game, namely its flexibilty, and the truth is you can do whatsoever you like in the Lands of Belorn and the Northern Wastes. If in a vindictive mood, how about leaving all the quests to heroes and spend some time tracking and slaying every orc that ever walked the lands? (but be warned, some orcs are as solid as animated tree trunks and will leave you a tired and hopeless prisoner).

The graphics on this later version are superior but this is not to say that they are necessarily more effective. Comparing the two versions, new and old, I found the first version, reviewed in June, easier to follow. The added shading and detail on the lakes, camps and ships either confuses, or detracts due to the object appearing to change on getting closer. The trees in the forests often appear not to change perspective as you approach. One reason for this, paradoxically, is the greater speed, but more fundamentally, the design of the trees themselves is at fault. *Midnight* got around this problem by ensuring that the front trees were sufficiently bushy to obscure most of the trees behind. Overall screen presentation has been improved with a picture of one of the three main characters in the top right and the text background is a mercifully darker shade.

Structurally very little has changed from the Games Workshop version. There are no mid compass directions such as SW, NE and so in order to travel SE one must first move east then south. This is a touch awkward when compared to *Midnight* which allowed eight directions, but *Runestone* scores with its full sentence input, the ability not only to approach fortified towers, pavilions and cave-dwellings but to enter them, and the thrill of guiding the dragonships about the lakes and waterways. One character's cruising can be observed by another on the shore which I think is one of





the most remarkable features of the game.

The story that accompanies the program is believable and coherent. Long ago, before the coming of the Dark One named Kordomir, the land of Belorn flourished. They were a proud and simple folk but by the time Firebird arrived they had became a more wise and learned bunch. This was in the great age of the wizards who dealt in the mysteries beyond the ken of common man, and the elves, who wandered deep into the forests. To the north lay the inhospitable wastes where few Belorn folk had ventured and none suspected the great threat imposed by the orcs, trolls and demonic types from that distant quarter.

When the fleets of dragonships descended upon the gentlefolk to the south, the lands were overrun. Wizards were ▶



slain, the elves moved on, and ancient treasures were carried off north by the orcs. Over the generations the raids continued and the populations of Belorn dwindled. The ultimate victory of Kordomir seemed inevitable. Yet from this state of despair began the epic quest of Greymarel the Wizard, Morval the Warrior and Eliador the Elf who ventured north to the wastes in a final attempt to destroy the Dark One.

There's no doubting the first assailants to be met from the evil forces from the north. The orcs are brutish bullies who bring off quick raids on the south, then dart back to the safety of a fortified tower in the north. Working out how best to deal with this early threat will be your first major tactical problem. Trying to fathom which character is useful in any given situation will provide many more. Avoiding the orcs may seem the best policy but in so doing you forfeit the chance of finding rich treasure chests and objects of great veneration.

You may find the constant 'Time Passes' which greets any pause in the action an annoyance at first, but after a short while you will begin to realise the significance of this — every beat of the clock brings the marauding orcs closer, so much so, that when you return to continue with a character you may well find him ensconsed within an orc-infested tower. Getting out of a well-guarded tower is anything but easy. Because of this real-time element the instructions wisely rule that a player should not dwell too long with the one character but constantly update the movements of each one.

Runestone was CRASH Smashed in June and it remains a very good program. Its chief deficiency then was its slow speed and this has been corrected by removing the slow BASIC routines. When you take a very good program and improve on it you get something that is well worth buying.

COMMENTS

Difficulty: easy to play, not so easy to complete
Graphics: improved perspective graphics
Input facility: allows full sentences and speech
Response: fast — a vast improvement on first version
Special features: interactive characters
General rating: excellent

Atmosphere	9
Vocabulary	8
Logic	8
Addictive quality	9
Overall	**9**

ROBIN OF SHERLOCK

Producer: Silversoft
Price: £7.95
Language: Quill, Illustrator and Patch
Author: Fergus McNeill

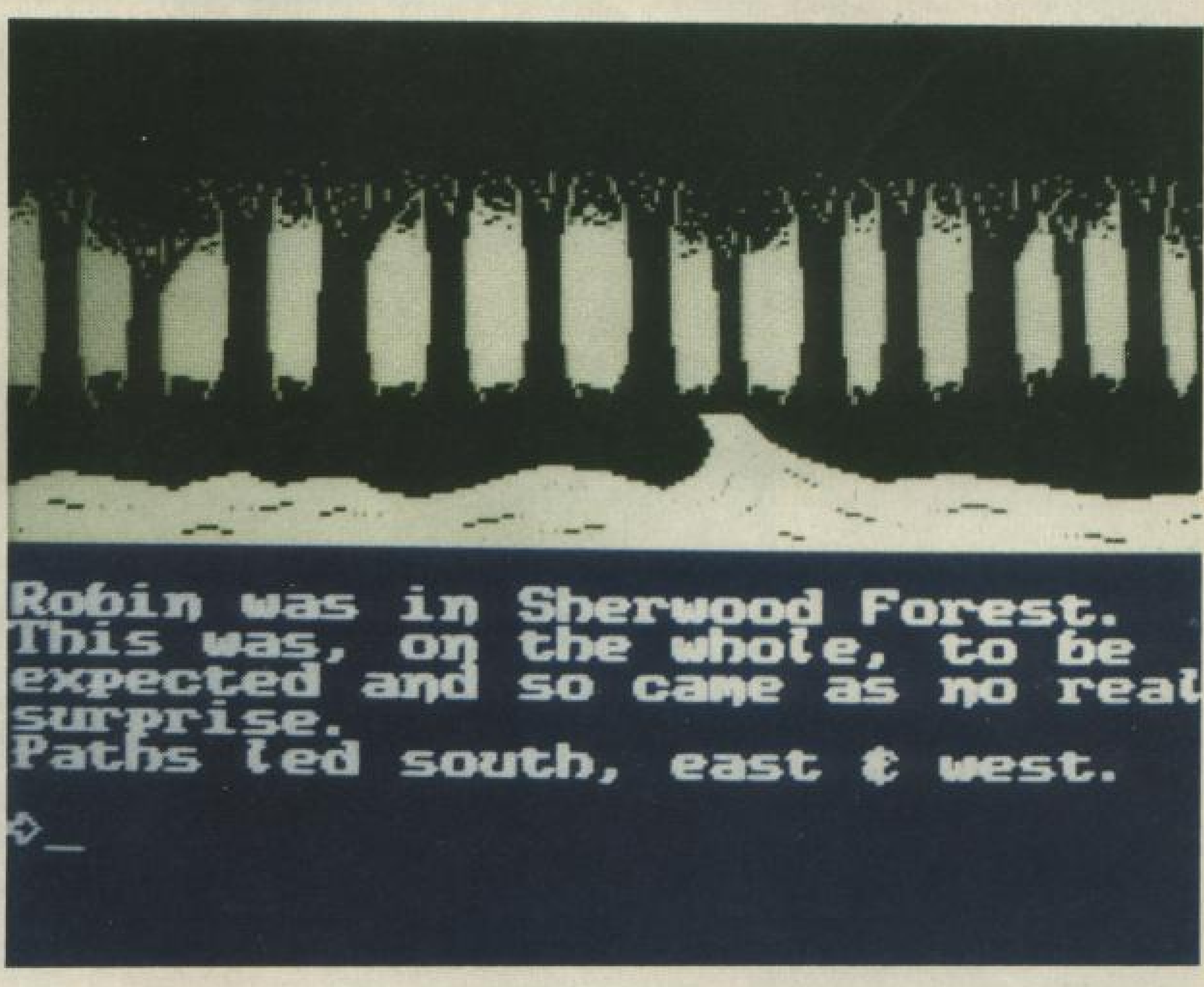
When does a cult become a bandwaggon? The cult was *Bored of the Rings* and when everyone was aboard it rolled its way up the charts as a band-waggon. The thing is now, does the bandwaggon roll on with *Robin of Sherlock* or does it hit the rut of consumer resistance? Only time will tell, but have a read of this to see what Delta 4 have come up with this time.

Bored of the Rings plagiarised Tolkien much more than the Harvard Lampoon book of the same name, so it would be reasonable to assume that much of its success was due to the instant familiarity this association provided. *Robin of Sherlock* (surprise, surprise) borrows much from *Robin of Sherwood* by Adventure International, and *Sherlock*, the awe-inspiring program devised by Melbourne House. Hence the familiarity factor won't be as great, and this program will have to make it on the strength of being a follow up to a highly successful chart game.

Your quest is set into three parts. You can move freely from one part of the adventure to another along with anything you happen to be carrying. The program accepts long-winded entries such as LEAN OVER AND KISS MARION or the speedier KISS MARION (in other words the program only looks for the second example which makes you wonder what all this complex sentence input lark is all about). Dialogue with characters in the game begins with TALK TO followed by TELL ME ABOUT YOUR ALIBI etc. (this phrase is borrowed from Sherlock in case you hadn't twigged). A very useful feature is the RAM SAVE and RAM LOAD which saves your current status in memory and returns you to the position respectively. GRAPHICS ON and OFF completes the competent and impressive range of facilities on the program. (OK these are *Patch* features but they are still impressive).

Playing the game is much as you'd expect. The first game of the three has you wondering around a forest which in places looks remarkably similar to the one in *Robin of Sherwood*. Much amusement must be derived from the stock sounds of trains passing and phones ringing (it's for you hoo!) as some of the humour is threadbare or esoteric (was that a joke or wasn't it . . .). I admit there is something inherently satisfying about cracking in jokes among a select gathering of like-minded friends but a commercial program must surely have a broader appeal. This is not to decry the effort expended in composing those jokes in the games which are genuinely amusing, as there are many such examples.

Humorous games are notoriously difficult to review. There's the problem of deciding just how universally funny the jokes are. Also, how much does the humour cover deficiencies in programming technique. What can be said of *Robin of Sherlock* is that it will appeal to that age group which can play adventures and comprehend zany humour. Judging by the success of *Bored of the Rings* there are many who both enjoy adven tures and seek this kind of amusement.



COMMENTS

Difficulty: about as difficult to get into as a Marillion LP
Graphics: nice
Presentation: well turned out
Input facility: a little beyond verb/noun
Response: fast
General Rating: I couldn't find John Cleese on my ballot paper

Atmosphere	7
Vocabulary	8
Logic	7
Addictive Quality	6
Overall	7


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KNOCKING THE SYSTEM ON ITS HEAD

Dear Derek
After many hours of phoning, breaking codes, leaving messages and hacking I finally completed System 1500 on the 29th of October. Here are some useful phone numbers and codes needed to complete the game:
L T Perry & Co. — *Tel. 493 5429. Codes are VIN 15 and INFRA.*
Message board — *Tel. 746 4460. No code needed.*
Reserve Manhattan Bank — *Tel. 010-1(212) 976 5757. The code is M8R. In Kingsdown Polytechnic it will say RM7, ignore it, it is an old code.*
A R Routledge & Co. — *Tel. 930 7269. The code is CCYRP455.*
Big Apple — *Tel. 010 — 1(212) 976 5858. The code is PIP537.*
Vinchetta (UK) — *Tel. 952 7001. The code is E2RA. The first time you ring disconnect and ring again.*
Mills Dyson & Co. — *Tel. 723 9293. The code is 6729.*
R Boon Ltd — *Tel. 348 1408. The code is 7Y4Y.*
Seastar Travel Ltd. — *Tel. 353 2104. No code needed.*
Elwood Brother — *Tel. 010-1(212)976 6868. The magic word is EBV1657.*
Satatel — *Tel. 222 2196. The code is ST412.*
Cilisy — *Tel. 363 4017. The code is 673281.*
Craig Communications — *Tel. 837 1099. The code is CRC3. There is a second code for Kingstown Poly: it is CL332.*
If you just want to complete the game then do the following. Ring up the Res Man Bank and type in M8R when asked for the code. When it asks for the code for the service required type in TFTB24. It will then ask for the account to transfer it from, type in Vinchetta. Then when asked for the account to transfer it to type in Comdata. Their bank is Midminster. The amount to transfer is £1,500,000. Finally it will ask for another code. Type in 2175. It will now confirm the transfer and the game will be finished.
Gerald Preston, Garstang, Lancs.

DON'T CALL US . . .

Dear Derek,
My brother and I, after buying *The Quill* in August 84, decided to experiment with it and write an adventure.

About two months passed and eventually we succeeded in producing an adventure. Although of low quality, we were pleased with it and with what we had achieved.

During the space of about nine months from then on we became accustomed to *The Quill*'s facilities and its functions until finally we produced a really good text adventure for the 48K Spectrum. Filled with ambition we sent the game to CCS and Gilsoft.

About a month passed, filled with anxiety, until we received a letter from CCS. Although saying the story was good they said there is no future for text adventures anymore.

"The story is good but graphics are essential now in adventure games and regret that we therefore will not be able to accept it for publication." they wrote.

Our only hope left was Gilsoft. About two months passed, so I decided to phone them and ask for their evaluation. Although the evaluation was not ready the person talking to me asked if it was a text or graphic adventure. I told him it was text and then he explained they wouldn't accept it as they now only accept graphic adventures and there is no market for text adventures.

If this attitude is to be taken by publishers, why do they try to encourage young people to write games? Also why do Gilsoft produce *The Quill* and *The Illustrator* separately? As they know no-one will accept text-only adventures, why don't they combine *The Quill* and *The Illustrator* together as one package — or are they only out to make money and not help the novice programmer?

I warn young programmers that if they are thinking of getting *The Quill*, they'd better be prepared to purchase *The Illustrator* also, otherwise *The Quill* is useless and you will only be able to sell your game to budget firms if at all.
Alan Rowland, Penllergaer, Swansea.C
I quite agree with the point you make about* The Quill *being sold separately to* The Illustrator. *Since both are necessary, when you add up the cost of the two it comes to a pretty sum.
DBC

CHEAP THRILL

Dear Derek,
Many moons ago there was a young Dungeons & Dragons fanatic who bought a ZX Spectrum thinking he might be able to play computerized D&D. Years passed since that time and his hope of finding a true D&D style adventure on the computer had almost vanished.

Suddenly, his seemingly helpless quest was completed when he bought Mastertronic's *Journey's End* which contains many features of D&D adventures, including hiring a party of men, finding treasure, gambling, using spells, graphical battles, hunting for food, magic items, gaining experience, traps, puzzles etc.

The amazing thing is it was only £1.99, and that for a three program, totally graphic adventure. Thank you Mastertronic, it was well worth waiting for.
Peter Croft, ShrewsburyC
Where has this D&D fanatic been? How could he have missed Mizar's excellent* Out of the Shadows*? Will he discover* Swords and Sorcery *or will his journey never end?
DBC

THE SHADOWS LENGTHEN

And now for some more of that brilliant letter on* Sorderon's Shadow *from the intrepid team of* Gary Bishop *&* Peter White *of Exeter. If I've got some of the spellings of the place names etc. wrong then just think of this as a kind of bonus — a sort of code . . . .

Return to village of Balinor. Offer bow to Karoba. Go to the church of Balinor, Karoba will follow you. Enter church and summon Aravor. Note message and leave. Look around for Karoba as he will have wandered off.

Go northwest with Aravor and Karoba. Offer phial to Morkoth in his hut at the northwest of the map. Take incense of awakening. Go east to Phiuns of Cuaral. Enter tunnel and find dragon, Tumbar. SAY TO TUMBAR, 'EAST', 'EAST', 'EAST'. Repeat this, directing Tumbar to the most northerly Tomb in Cuaral. (When talking to characters eg, the dragon, use SAY TO TUMBAR 'WELCOME', as they invariably do not obey the first command, and then enter 'EAST', or whatever command is required without using SAY TO as now every command in quotes refers to the last character spoken to). Tumbar will break open the tomb. Enter tomb and use incense. SAY TO KERAL 'LEAVE', 'LEAVE' and repeat until he leaves. Leave yourself and find Karoba as he will have wandered off. Return with him to Keral. When Keral sees Karoba he will take you to Plavor's castle. Take note of what Plavor says.

Go to the Krokleaf pastures. Find the krok fruit at one of the lakes by a laver pool. Go through the time arch to the north. This will take you to Samus's lair at the cave warrens of Triton. Offer fruit to Samus. He takes you to the mountains of Mom. Take Axe of Shadows. Return to the cave warrens of Triton. Stand outside one of the caves, looking south to the cave, and if you have the eye of Togar you will see the word Pareital written above the cave. Enter cave. Enter Pareital. A tunnel will open. Tunnel south and take the Amulet of Protection.

Go through the time arch again to return to the Krokleaf pastures. Go west to the mountains of Umbro. Stand looking north to the impassable mountain, above the clearing going north through the forest of Umbra. Exam axe. Enter Bissal. A tunnel will open. Go north take key of Sakal. You may have to drop things to take the key. Make sure you always keep the eye of Togar and Prism of Nolidor. Return to Plavor's castle. Give him a Amulet of Protection.

FOURTH PROTOCOL

**Dear Derek,
Here are some things of interest for Part Two (probably the best) of the *Fourth Protocol* — The Bomb.**

**a) get your wallet from your desk by using the key in your coat pocket
b) in the security, look under surname Preston in the filing cabinet to find your D
c) the portable help computer is on the same floor as your office. Files available are LIFT, POEM, CODE, BARBICAN, BLODWYN, TREASURY, TRAVEL, WASHER, FASLANE, MONEY, AUTHORISATION, EXPENSES, SEARCH, HELP (use HELP just to see what it does — you may regret it!)
d) the code for the lift is ASPEN
e) once out of the building head east then down into Euston Tube Station. Remember to buy tickets before going through the barriers!
f) change at Victoria for Victoria Line.
g) change at South Kensington for Heathrow and Boston Manor
h) get off at Great Portland Street (Circle Line) to find university college where you may find some things of interest. (You can translate the words that Pasternak muttered in Part 1).
i) get off at Westminster (Circle) and head east across the bridge to find Sentinel House. On the first floor is your new office. Lift Code is 42431282. Second floor houses the special projects room (take geiger counter and the briefcase — you can visit a shop in Boston Manor to get the briefcase fixed and then you can bug someone).
j) ask the programmer to run a search called Freighter and go to the printer room for the results.
k) Phone the two numbers (02726514 and 0255502) from the communication centre and then get a train from Paddington to Bristol to investigate (cost is £19).
l) get a bus to the docks (from Platform 1) and question the skipper of the Mistral.
m) on the way out show your ID to the guard who will give you some information and he will phone the police.
n) return to London and go to your new office and read the report.
o) go to the basement and take a Magnum then phone number on report (427010) and do as instructed.
p) if you need any more money go to the top floor of Sentinel House and talk to C's secretary who will give you a note that you can take to the treasury to get £200.
q) the note you found on the dead body will give you a lead so go the Tower of London and show your ID this should eliminate another 2 terrorists (if you've a gun).
r) you can ask the programmer to do another search (INCIDENT) and phone their numbers (03042078 & 0412026)
s) travel to Dover from Victoria and wait in the station forecourt for police car to arrive.
t) next try for a train to Faslane (Glasgow)**

**On my copy this is as far as I can get because Liverpool St. Railway Station has a ticket office but the wrong icon appears (a phone!). Is this a bug?
Also, travelling west in the Barbican causes the program to crash — has anyone else got this problem?
And, has anyone managed to use the bug and receiver?
(Tip for Part Three — warehouse name is TIPTREE. Remember to kill ALL agents first). Hope you find these of help and pass then on to your readers.
Mark Whatling, London E18C**

Although I haven't mentioned the software prize for best letter for a few months it has, nonetheless, been awarded quietly on the side. This month's prize goes to Mark **Whatling** ***for his tips on*** **Fourth Protocol.**

S·I·G·N S·T·U·M·P·S

Here's this month's selection of problems which have you stumped in SIGNSTUMPS.

Ian Harrison ***from Llandudno writes*** **"I am having trouble in *Mafia Contract* by Atlantis. Where do you find a drink? How do I get it? I keep passing out before I can find it I think it is in sealed crates in the warehouse but I pass out after I get the toolbox. Please can you help me".**

You obtain a drink in DIJOBUPXO. You must ESJOL NFUIT. Strange saving you when NFUIT is 5% methanol which is bad news!

Ian ***also asks in a second letter on the same game*** **"In *Mafia Contract* how do you buy the bullet proof vest and the gun from the shop? Do I need to get it before or after I see Don Capallo? I keep getting killed straight after Don has told me to go and kill the Knife."**

You can get the gun and bullet proof vest at any time. Go to the shop. When the man asks "Who is your boss?" answer MPV GFSSFMP. The I.D. he wants is the QBTTQPSU from SPPN 9.

Steven Chown ***of East Sussex asks*** **"How do you buy the map off the disreputable pixie in Bored of the Rings?"**

You insert the CBUUFSZ into the WFOEJOH machine to get a coin

"I would be very greatful if you could relieve the frustration I am having with Adventure International's excellent *Touchstones of Rhiannon*" ***writes*** R Hillard ***of North Chingford.*** **"Where is the archery tournament? Is it in the castle? If it is, how do I hitch a lift to get back into the castle?"**

The archery tournament is in OPUUJOHIBN, HP OPUUJOHIBN once everything else is done. As far as I'm aware you cannot hitch a lift.

Chiyin Tse ***from Botley, Oxon is having trouble with a couple of Adventure International games and writes*** **"In *The Hulk*, please could you tell me where I can find the wax and also how can I pass the Chief Examiner to go through the door?
"In *Spiderman*, how can I get the gem from the aquarium (I've dealt with Hydroman already) and where are Dr Octopus and Electro?"**

The wax is in a EPNF which look identical to the one you initially leave. I don't think you can progress any further past the Chief Examiner although there is a gem in his office. If you have delt with Hydroman all you have to do is take the block of ice to another room and raise the thermostat. To get to Dr Octopus and Electro you will need to get onto the roof first. Hints may be obtained from past issues.

After an interesting letter, David Salter ***of Nottingham adds*** **"... oh, and by the way Derek, have you any idea how to get out of the cell in the *Hero's of Karn*. It's driving me crazy"**

As it happens I have got the answer to this one. Give NPOFZ to HVBSE and he will set you free leaving you a copper key needed later.

Geoffrey Mole ***of Lancaster asks "Do you know how to get past the thin red line?". Of course he's on about Level 9's*** **Red Moon.**

Because of the electrified grid you must wear XFMMJOHUPO CPPUT.

Phil McHugh ***of Cheetham, Manchester is finding his search for the*** **Jewels of Babylon** ***impeded by a locked door in the pirates cave. To open the rock door JOTFSU SPE JO IPMF.***

S Longstaff ***of Crewe asks of the ever popular*** **Gremlins "help! I am getting mauled by gremlins in the bar, how do I get rid of the terrible fiends? How do I blow up the cinema and how do I kill the gremlin in the mail box?"**

The gremlins in the bar are dealt with by picking up the DBNFSB and pressing the CVUUPO whereupon the fiends rush off. Your other queries are typical of many I receive where people are trying something they need not do or are attempting something at the wrong time or place. At the mail box light GMBTI, JOTFSU GMBTI and Stripe will jump out and run off. Start the projector in the DJOFNB and this will keep the gremlins happy for a while. But you don't blow up the DJOFNB, you blow up the IBSEXBSF TUPSF.

Daniel Talbot ***from Kinver, W. Midlands writes*** **"I am new to world of adventure. I have 3 problems and hope that you can help:**

**1) In Delta 4's *Bored of the Rings* how do I travel through the old Forest without being caught by the willow tree or how to I escape the tree?
2) In *Eric the Viking* how do I avoid being killed by the trolls?'
3) In Mikro-Gen's *Witch's Cauldron*, how do I pass through the south door in the room with the strange sign on the wall?"**

To escape the willow tree TIPVU IFMU. I know of no Trolls in **Eric and the Viking** ***and I can't work out where you are in*** **Witch's Cauldron, more details would help.**

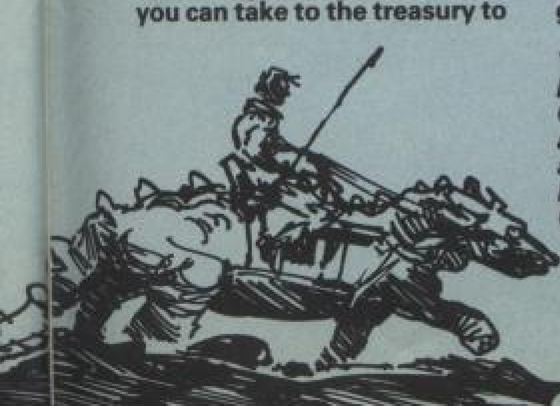
ENCRYPTION CORNER

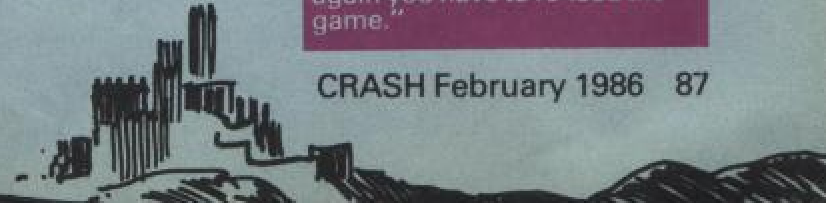
It's easy to speak Brewster!

ENGLISH:	ZABCDEFGHIJKL
BREWSTER:	ABCDEFGHIJKLM
ENGLISH:	MNOPQRSTUVWXY
BREWSTER:	NOPQRSTUVWXYZ

S·U·P·E·R·H·E·R·O

Richard Watson **from N Humberside is this months SUPERHERO.** "I am writing to let you know I completed *Hacker* on Monday November 11. The answers to the four security checks are 1. MAGMA LTD 2. AXD-0310479 3. HYDRAULIC 4. AUSTRALIA. Having traded with the agents and collected all the pieces of the map, you then go to Washington DC where you are greeted by Agent Lery of the FBI. Pressing RETURN then displays the front page of the Washington Post with the headlines: MICRO BUFF HELPS FBI SAVE WORLD and columns of news telling of your success. This screen then freezes and nothing can be done with the game (is this a bug?) To play again you have to re-load the game."





SO YOU THINK YOU COULD BE A CRACK SECURITY GUARD?

Twenty five comfy WEST BANK sweatshirts up for grabs in Gremlin Graphics' "Design a Baddie" competition

Sooo, you've watched all those Westerns and sympathised with the gun totin' sheriff. You've run around with a pretend six shooter made by clenching your fist and pointing your first two fingers. "Bang, Bang" you've shouted, "Gotcha — you're dead".

Now you can play the game for nearly real, with *West Bank* from Gremlin Graphics, which puts you in the hot seat as hired gun in a frontier-town bank. Blow away the baddies and don't shoot the goodies and lots of money gets paid into the bank and the manager is friendly (about the only friendly bank manager this minion's ever met, and no mistake! The last thing I'd like to do is encourage criminal activity amongst CRASH readers, but this minion's so broke he often thinks about going halves on a pair of tights and going into the cash withdrawal business with old LM. But honesty prevails . . . and it's back to writing comps.)

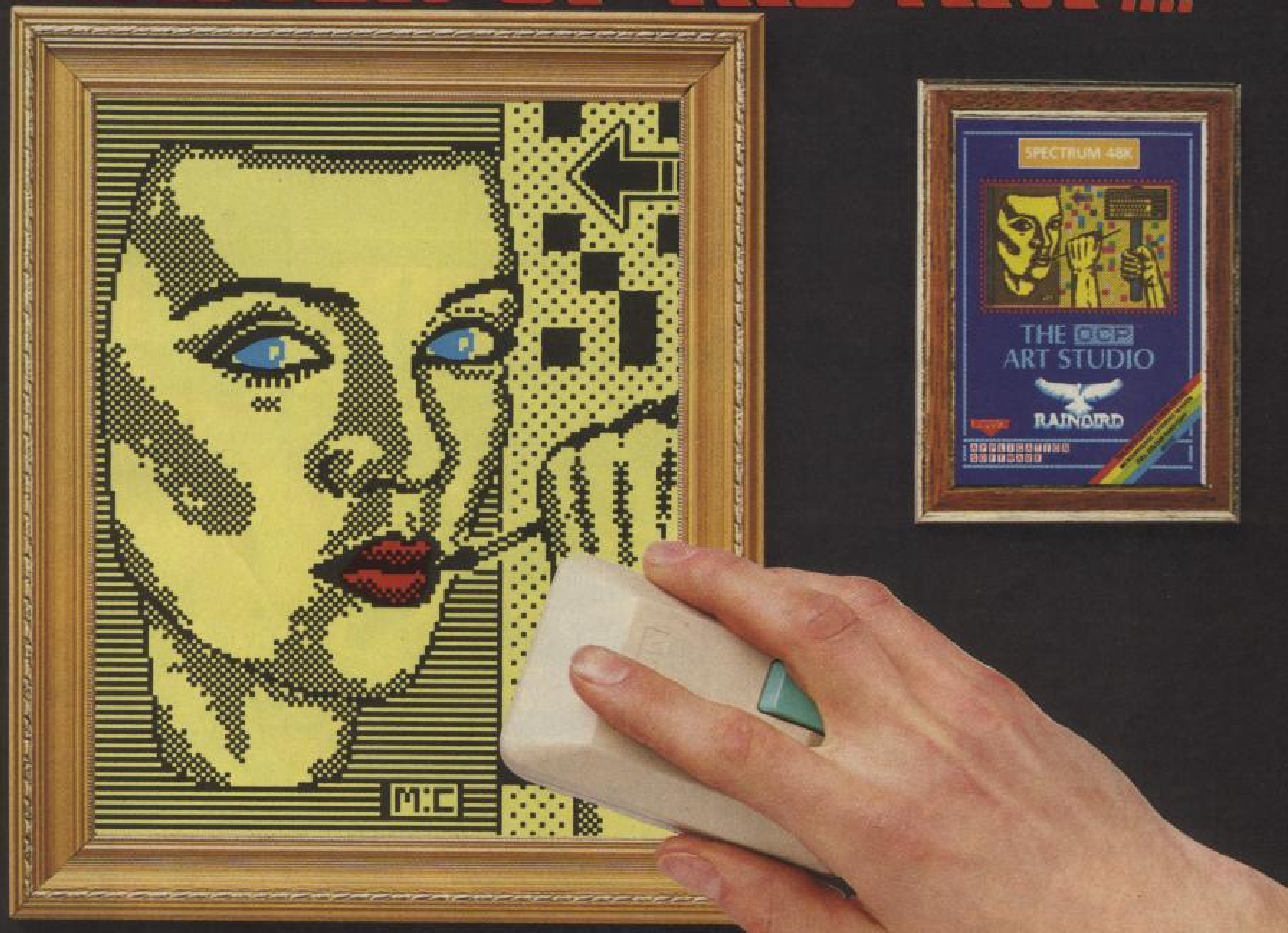
There's a whole stack of characters in the game, some of whom are real out and out baddies, itching and twitching to pump you full of lead. What we'd like you to do is design another baddie.

Study the screenshot from *West Bank* that appears here and have a go at dreaming up a baddie who you might expect to see showing his (or maybe even her) nose through the door of a Wild West Banking emporium. Let your imagination run riot and come up with a real criminal type. The kind who should be safely behind bars for the protection of society (and banks).

Commit a portrait of your evil-doer to paper — you may wish to add a few biographical notes on his or her career just to round your entry off. It's up to you. Whatever you do, do it NOW and get your entry into the postbox by 27th February. Criminal types to WEST BANK BADDIES C/o CRASH GOODIES, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1DB.



MASTER OF THE ART....



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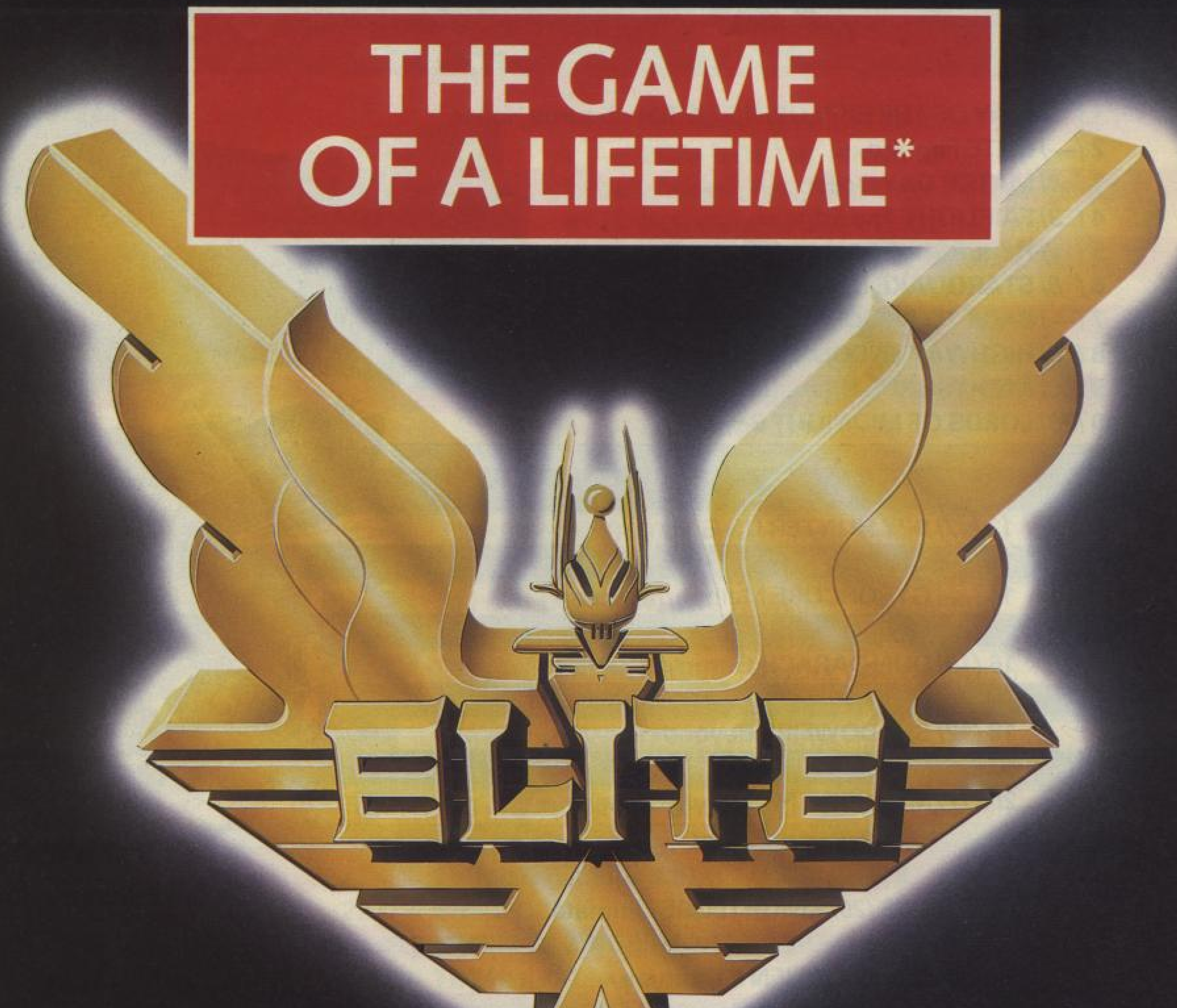
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THE GAME
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ELITE

HOTLINE TOP 30 FOR FEB

1 *(1)* **WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST** Melbourne House
2 *(—)* **ELITE** Firebird
3 *(8)* **MATCH DAY** Ocean
4 *(3)* **FAIRLIGHT** The Edge
5 *(2)* **HYPERSPORTS** Imagine
6 *(8)* **STARQUAKE** Bubble Bus
7 *(—)* **BACK TO SKOOL** Microsphere
8 *(5)* **HIGHWAY ENCOUNTER** Vortex
9 *(6)* **NIGHTSHADE** Ultimate
10 *(28)* **LORDS OF MIDNIGHT** Beyond

Highest new entry this month is **Firebird**'s *Elite* which arrives at number two. Another pretty impressive entry is made by **Microsphere** with *Back to Skool* (and considering its prequel, *Skooldaze* is still going strong at 27, that isn't bad). But still at number one is *Way of the Exploding Fist* from **Melbourne House**. They must be well pleased with the response to that. Nobody has fared too badly though with the biggest drop being *Alien 8* — at least that's had a long run!



11 *(4)* **SPY Vs SPY** Beyond
12 *(7)* **SPY HUNTER** US Gold
13 *(14)* **DYNAMITE DAN** Mirrorsoft
14 *(—)* **GYROSCOPE** Melbourne House
15 *(—)* **DOOMDARK'S REVENGE** Beyond
16 *(13)* **DUN DARACH** Gargoyle Games
17 *(11)* **FRANK BRUNO'S BOXING** Elite
18 *(12)* **SHADOWFIRE** Beyond
19 *(10)* **NODES OF YESOD** Odin
20 *(17)* **MARSPORT** Gargoyle Games

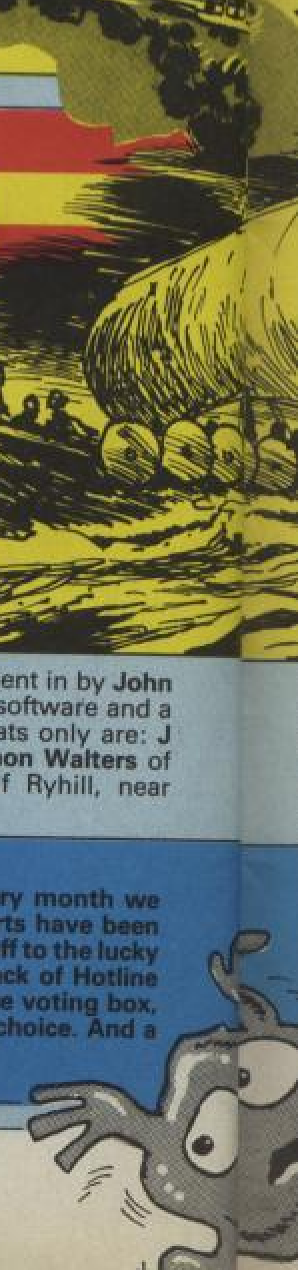
21 *(—)* **MONTY MOLE** Gremlin Graphics
22 *(20)* **KNIGHTLORE** Ultimate
23 *(18)* **DALEY THOMPSON'S SUPERTEST** Ocean
24 *(16)* **ALIEN 8** Ultimate
25 *(—)* **WORLD SERIES BASKETBALL** Imagine
26 *(—)* **ROBIN O' THE WOOD** Odin
27 *(24)* **SKOOLDAZE** Microsphere
28 *(—)* **COMMANDO** Elite
29 *(23)* **STARION** Melbourne House
30 *(25)* **MATCHPOINT** Psion

First out of the ballot box this month was the form sent in by **John Marazzi** of Leiston Suffolk. Lucky John wins £40 of software and a CRASH T Shirt. Runners up, who get Shirts and Hats only are: **J Taylor**, of Norwich, Mark Seddon **of Gosforth, Simon Walters** of Cannock, and last (but no leastest) **L Kennet** of Ryhill, near Wakefield.

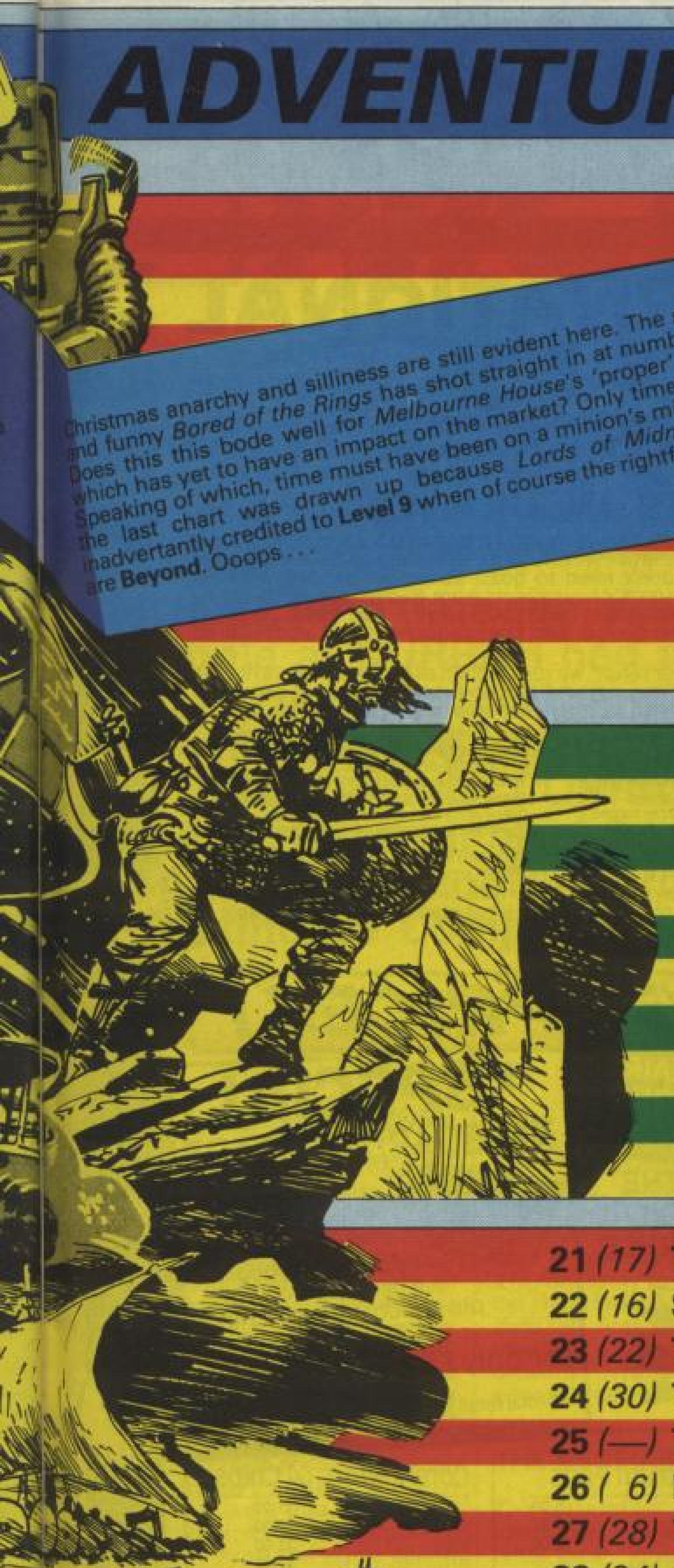
The CRASH HOTLINE AND ADVENTURE CHART is Britain's most important popularity chart. For Spectrum Software, at least. The chart depends entirely on your support and we need your votes in order to produce the analysis of who's playing what.

Nowadays, there's only ONE WAY to submit your votes — and that's by post. Towards the back of the magazine, lurking very close to the competition results bit, you'll find a couple of coupons that you can use to send us your votes. If you're really unkeen on cutting up your magazine, you could always use a photocopy, or copy out the details on the forms onto a plain piece of paper.

Whatever you do, get those voting forms in. Every month we draw out a total of ten winning forms after the charts have been compiled, five for each chart, and prizes go whizzing off to the lucky senders of those forms. The first form out of the sack of Hotline votes, like the first one to come out of the Adventure voting box, wins its sender £40 worth of software of his or her choice. And a CRASH T Shirt, of course.



ADVENTURE TOP 30 CHART



Christmas anarchy and silliness are still evident here. The satirical and funny *Bored of the Rings* has shot straight in at number one! Does this this bode well for *Melbourne House*'s 'proper' version which has yet to have an impact on the market? Only time will tell. Speaking of which, time must have been on a minion's mind when the last chart was drawn up because *Lords of Midnight* was inadvertantly credited to **Level 9** when of course the rightful owners are **Beyond**. Ooops . . .

1 *(12)* **RETURN TO EDEN** Level 9
2 *(—)* **BORED OF THE RINGS** Silversoft
3 *(4)* **FOURTH PROTOCOL** Hutchinson
4 *(5)* **DOOMDARK'S REVENGE** Beyond
5 *(1)* **MARSPORT** Gargoyle Games
6 *(23)* **EMERALD ISLE** Level 9
7 *(2)* **RED MOON** Level 9
8 *(—)* **TERRORMOLINOS** Melbourne House
9 *(26)* **SNOWBALL** Level 9
10 *(7)* **LORDS OF TIME** Level 9
11 *(10)* **LORDS OF MIDNIGHT** Beyond
12 *(15)* **SPIDERMAN** Adventure International
13 *(3)* **DUN DARACH** Gargoyle Games
14 *(13)* **DRAGONTORC** Hewson Consultants
15 *(—)* **SORDERON'S SHADOW** Beyond
16 *(—)* **FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD** Ocean
17 *(8)* **SHADOWFIRE** Beyond
18 *(14)* **HAMPSTEAD** Melbourne House
19 *(21)* **GREMLINS** Adventure International
20 *(—)* **ROBIN OF SHERWOOD** Adventure International
21 *(17)* **TIR NA NOG** Gargoyle Games
22 *(16)* **SHERLOCK** Melbourne House
23 *(22)* **THE HOBBIT** Melbourne House
24 *(30)* **THE HULK** Adventure International
25 *(—)* **TWIN KNIGDOM VALLEY** Bugbyte
26 *(6)* **KENTILLA** Micromega
27 *(28)* **VALHALLA** Legend
28 *(24)* **AVALON** Hewson Consultants
29 *(19)* **URBAN UPSTART** Richard Shepherd
30 *(—)* **ADRIAN MOLE** Level 9/Mosaic Publishing

Tim Dickson secures top slot this ish. He comes from Sutton, Surrey where we'll soon be sending a Shirt and lots of software . . . Runners up this month are as follows: **Geoffrey Marshall** from Dundee, bonny Scotland, **D Rothwell** of Washington, Tyne and Wear, **Paul Lawson**, of Southend-on-Sea and, of course, **Raymond Dovey** who hails from Halstead, Essex.

The next four voting slips for each chart, that's eight voters in all, win a T Shirt and Cap. Don't miss out on your chance to win all these goodies for the cost of a 17p stamp and the time it takes to put pen and your opinions to paper. CRASH HOTLINE and CRASH ADVENTURE TRAIL are what we call the giant boxes that your votes go into, and they can be reached via PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.



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TECH NICHE

GOING FORTH . .

A long, long time ago, there was a little firm called CURRAH, and the people at CURRAH had a dream ... They dreamt that they could create a magic box that would give the mysterious 'Spectrum User' powers beyond imagination.

Unfortunately, CURRAH went bust before their dream became reality, but their black box that gives you FORTH, an Assembler and a debugging tool, all from within BASIC, is now available from Quadhouse Computers. At £19.50 *Paul Gardner* finds it hard to resist.

FIRST, A LITTLE HISTORY

Back in early 1984, **MicroSource** was conceived as an idea. It was originally to be a ROM based BASIC compiler and assembler package. It soon became apparent though, with the prices of ROM chips as they were, that the BASIC compiler would either have to be quite limited or expensive to produce. The next idea was to offer a Forth compiler and an assembler. That was possible because of the compact nature of Forth code. It was finally designed and tested but then CURRAH went into liquidation. MicroSource was not forgotten, however, and the rights to the package were bought by **DK'tronics** in mid 1984. Then it was forgotten. Now, more than a year after it was finally completed, **Quadhouse Computers** have negotiated the rights to distribute MicroSource, and at a much lower price than was originally intended.

THE PACKAGE

The final MicroSource package is a plug-in ROM based module that gives you access to Forth, an Assembler and a 'Software Front Panel' debugging tool. The box itself is similar to the CURRAH MicroSpeech package, but smaller. It is another 'last in the line' add-on for the Spectrum, so you will need a motherboard of sorts if you want to plug in any other products that don't have a through connector.

The MicroSource circuit holds two chips, a 4K masked ROM and a small ULA. The ROM is switched in whenever a new variable is created. Because of this it is necessary to make sure that the Interface 1 variables are installed first if you have an Interface 1 attached — either cause an error or do a CAT of your microdrive.

THE ASSEMBLER

The assembler is a full Z80 assembler that supports macros with local labels, conditional assembly, powerful pseudo-ops, various number bases and an expression evaluator that allows you to import the contents of pre-defined BASIC variables into machine code. The assembler is invoked by a statement:

LET assemble=0

and the assembly routine then follows this statement as a list of REM ! lines eg:

```
810 LET assemble=0
820 REM ! org 32000
830 REM !start ld a,2
840 REM ! defm a$
850 REM ! ret
860 — (basic program continued) —
```

The contents of the variable a$

The Assembly listing produced when MicroSource assembles lines 920 to 1180 of the first listing.

```
MicroSource CURRAH 1984

 920 0000
                       list 3
 930 0000                                      opt 2+4+16+32+64
 940 F618                                      org  63000
 950 F618 F5               mcr                 push af
 960 F619 E5                                   push hl
 970 F61A C5               save                push bc
 980 F61B C5                                   push bc
 990 F61C E1                                   pop  hl
1000 F61D 2B                                   dec  hl
1010 F61E 46                                   ld   b,(hl)
1020 F61F 2B                                   dec  hl
1030 F620 4E                                   ld   c,(hl)
1040 F621 E1                                   pop  hl
1050 F622 7E               loop                ld   a,(hl)
1060 F623 FE 61                                cp   97
1070 F625 FA 2F F6                             jp   m,notlo
1080 F628 FE 7B                                cp   123
1090 F62A F2 2F F6                             jp   p,notlo
1100 F62D CB AE                                res  5,(hl)
1110 F62F 23               notlo               inc  hl
1120 F630 0B                                   dec  bc
1130 F631 78                                   ld   a,b
1140 F632 B1                                   or   c
1150 F633 C2 22 F6                             jp   nz,loop
1160 F636 E1               resto               pop  hl
1170 F637 F1                                   pop  af
1180 F638 C9                                   ret

   0 Total Errors

mcr          F618
save         F61A
loop         F622
notlo        F62F
resto        F636

Start           Length
63000 (F618H)     33 (0021H)
```

THE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

Three subroutines in different languages achieve the same thing: turning lower case characters into upper case characters — a tedious example, maybe, but it shows how you can take a BASIC variable (Z$ here) and use it in three separate languages!

```
10 REM demo program for micro source
20 CLEAR 63000
30 GO SUB 500: REM define forth words
40 GO SUB 900: REM assemble m/c
50 REM set up test string
60 PRINT "Please wait"
70 PRINT "  - setting up string"'
80 LET s$=""
90 FOR i=32 TO 127
95 LET s$=s$+CHR$ (i)
100 NEXT i
105 REM lengthen the string
110 LET s$=s$+s$
120 LET s$=s$+s$
130 LET s$=s$+s$
140 LET s$=s$+s$
150 LET s$=s$+s$
160 PRINT "Length of string is ";LEN s$;" chars"
170 INPUT "Press enter to continue";n$: CLS
180 LET z$=s$: PRINT '"Basic start"
190 GO SUB 400: REM basic routine
200 PRINT "Basic end"
210 INPUT "Press enter to contnue";n$: CLS
220 LET z$=s$: PRINT '"Forth start"
230 GO SUB 700: REM forth routine
240 PRINT "Forth end"
250 INPUT "Press enter to continue";n$
260 LET z$=s$: PRINT '"M/C start"
270 GO SUB 1300: REM forth into m/c
280 PRINT "M/C end"
290 STOP
300 REM subroutines in different languages
310 REM to change a string to upper case
320 REM
400 REM Basic subroutine
410 REM
420 FOR i=1 TO LEN (z$)
430 LET y$=z$(i)
440 IF y$>="a" AND y$<="z" THEN  LET y$=CHR$ (COD
E (y$)-32): LET z$(i)=y$
450 NEXT i
460 RETURN
470 REM
500 REM Forth definitions
510 LET forth=0
520 REM # % upcase
530 REM #  OVER + SWAP
540 REM #  DO
550 REM #   I C@
560 REM #   DUP DUP 96 >
570 REM #   SWAP 123 < AND
580 REM #   IF
590 REM #    11011111B AND
600 REM #    I C!
610 REM #   ELSE
620 REM #    DROP
630 REM #   THEN
640 REM #  LOOP ;
650 REM #
660 RETURN
670 REM
700 REM actual run time call
710 LET forth=1
720 REM # COPY Z$ upcase
730 RETURN
740 REM
900 REM m/c routine definition
910 LET assemble=1
920 REM !        list 3
930 REM !        opt 2+4+16+32+64
940 REM !        org  63000
950 REM !mcr     push af
960 REM !        push hl
970 REM !save    push bc
980 REM !        push bc
990 REM !        pop  hl
1000 REM !       dec  hl
1010 REM !       ld   b,(hl)
1020 REM !       dec  hl
1030 REM !       ld   c,(hl)
1040 REM !       pop  hl
1050 REM !loop   ld   a,(hl)
1060 REM !       cp   97
1070 REM !       jp   m,notlo
1080 REM !       cp   123
1090 REM !       jp   p,notlo
1100 REM !       res  5,(hl)
1110 REM !notlo  inc  hl
1120 REM !       dec  bc
1130 REM !       ld   a,b
1140 REM !       or   c
1150 REM !       jp   nz,loop
1160 REM !resto  pop  hl
1170 REM !       pop  af
1180 REM !       ret
1190 RETURN : REM back to basic
1200 REM
1300 REM forth interface to m/c
1310 LET forth=0
1320 REM # COPY Z$ DROP GET mcr USR DROP
1330 RETURN : REM back to basic
```

are imported onto the assembly routine during assembly and occupy the bytes reserved by the DEFM pseudo op.

Any labels used in the assembly routine are set up as BASIC variables and can be used directly in a BASIC program. So for the above routine, **RANDOMISE USR start** would call the routine.

The assembler outputs the machine code it produces either directly into memory, or to any opened channel if you have an Interface 1 fitted. Object code produced can be saved onto microdrive files or even sent over the network. For non microdrive owners the assembler will print a 'map' of the object code locations, so that you can save it to tape using the usual **SAVE "name" CODE** routine.

As your source code is assembled, the assembly listing produced can be output to screen, printer or again, to any opened channel. *Listing 2* is an assembly listing of the routine contained in the demonstration program.

THE FORTH

The Forth is invoked from BASIC by the statement:

LET forth=0

after which the Forth system will execute or compile the following lines as Forth code. Like the assembler, the Forth lines in a program start with a REM statement:

890 LET forth=1
900 REM # 2 DUP + 32000 C!
910 REM # % newword 100 10 DO I. LOOP ;
920 REM # newword
930 — (basic program continued) —

For technical reasons, any Forth definitions are started with a % (percent) sign instead of the usual : (colon).

Forth definitions are compiled into a dictionary which can be saved to tape or microdrive and later re-loaded and linked into the dictionary, although only if loaded back into the original memory locations.

The Forth language supported is a small subset of Forth '79. Most of the omissions cover virtual memory, double length number handling and most of the useful commands for creating your own data and language structures. Some useful additions include the ability to pass variables between BASIC and Forth and the ability to pass parameters into, and then call, machine code routines. *Listing 3* gives the full list of Forth words supported. Those marked with an asterisk differ from the standard in some way.

DEBUG

The debugging part of the package is a 'software front panel' that allows you to step through machine code routines while displaying the contents of all, or some of the Z80 registers and a section of memory. *Listing 4* shows a screen dump of the form panel, as it views the machine code that was assembled from the demonstration program. Debug also allows you to display memory contents as screens full of hex bytes or ASCII characters. There are a number of commands that allow you to selectively step through machine code routines, with the option of following, or not following, subroutine calls as you wish.

For all the potential of Debug as a tool it is badly let down in two respects. It is very difficult to follow a machine code routine that is simply displayed as hex bytes. If only the current instructions were displayed as Z80 assembly mnemonics it would be easier to use. The other problem concerns print-outs. I use an old Kempston printer interface and when Debug tries to send the display output to my printer the entire system crashes! However, I have been assured that Debug works perfectly with



The Forth vocabulary supported by MicroSource.

```
Forth Vocabulary:
SWAP DUP ?DUP DROP OVER ROT PICK(*)
RP(*) . ? U. H.(*) C.(*) TYPE ."(*)
EMIT CR SP + - 1+ 1- 2* 2/ * / MOD /MOD
NEG MAX MIN ABS AND OR(*) XOR(*) RL(*)
RR(*) @ ! +! C@ C! ' CONST VAR = <> > <
0< NOT >= <= I I' J >R R> RP(*) IF ELSE
THEN DO LOOP +LOOP BEGIN UNTIL WHILE
REPEAT ABORT(*) HERE ALLOT , C, H(*)
FORGET EMPTY LAST(*) #(*)  STACK(*)
LINK(*) ( MOVE USR(*) GET(*) PUT(*)
COPY(*) TOK(*)

Those words followed by (*) are
different to the Forth '79 standard in
some way.
```

```
 A=00   F=SZOHOPNC  M=F618

BC=0000> F3 AF 11 FF FF C3 CB 11
DE=0000> F3 AF 11 FF FF C3 CB 11
HL=0000> F3 AF 11 FF FF C3 CB 11
IX=0000> F3 AF 11 FF FF C3 CB 11
IY=5C3A> FF CD 00 B1 F5 6B AD 00

   F558> 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00
SP=F560> 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00
   F568> 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00
   F570> 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00

   F600> 71 15 F6 21 17 9B 36 98
   F608> 03 00 05 00 00 49 71 44
   F610> 71 52 1C 76 1B 03 13 00
PC=F618> F5 E5 C5 C5 E1 2B 46 2B
   F620> 4E E1 7E FE 61 FA 2F F6
   F628> FE 7B F2 2F F6 CB AE 23
   F630> 0B 78 B1 C2 22 F6 E1 F1
   F638> C9 00 00 00 00 00 00 00
   F640> 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00
```

The screendump of a typical Debug Front Panel display — in this instance, displaying the machine code routine, again derived from lines 920 to 1180 of Listing 1.

Interface 1 and any serial port printer, or the original Sinclair printer.

THE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

This simple demonstration has a main BASIC part that sets up a string of 3072 characters of mixed character codes. The program contains three 'sub-routines', one in BASIC, one in Forth and one in assembly language. These routines are functionally identical in that they will convert the string in Z$ so that all the lower case letters are changed to upper case ones. Before any of the routines are called, the Forth lines need to be compiled and the assembly code needs to be assembled. After that the test string is set up and each routine is used to convert a copy of the test string. The retrospective timings for the routines are some indication of the speed advantage to be gained by not using BASIC for the repetitive or slow sections of a program:

BASIC 100 seconds
Forth 30 seconds
M/C 0.05 seconds

BUGS

It is unfortunate but there are some. Given the history of this product, we are unlikely to see a bug free ROM being released. Apart from the error in Debug which stops it printing out to a Kempston printer interface, there seems to be no serious bug in the Assembler-Debug part of the package. The most serious bug I have found is in the Forth. Contrary to the Forth '79 standard, in this version you can use the word ." (dot-quote) outside word definitions but not inside word definitions! For you BASIC fans, that's like having a version of BASIC that won't let you PRINT text strings written as part of the program ... For similar reasons you may as well not include comments in your Forth programs because if you're not careful they cause some very spurious errors that you will never find.

One other 'bug' is that you can only transport the values and addresses of simple variables between the BASIC, Forth and assembly language. This means that you cannot easily get Forth to do processing on BASIC arrays. This is a real pity, as array processing is one of the most time-consuming elements of BASIC programming.

CONCLUSION

The assembler itself is worth the £19.50 that is being asked for the whole package. If you are aware of the bugs in the Forth then it is easy to evade or avoid them. The manual is very good and explains things in just the right amount of detail. The program listed in this article should show you some of the power the MicroSource offers you. I shall certainly buy this one! (*High praise indeed* — **ED**)

MicroSource costs £19.50 from:
Quadhouse Computers
Regent House
Victoria Road
Middlesborough
CLEVELAND
TS1 3HX

SOUND MASTER

Producer: Whiz Bang Software
Author: **Roy Dictus**
Price: **£2.00**

Sound Master is a software driven sound sampler which has already appeared as a listing in another magazine. It enables you to input sounds without any additional hardware. Once sound has been input, it is then converted to digits, which may be shuffled about by the software, and played out again in analogue form. Up to 4 seconds of sounds may be input, which can be played back at 8 different speeds.

The program gives you several options as to how you wish to hear your sampled sound played back including changes of speed, echo that can disappear, appear or speed up and so on. So far so good, but it does have some built in problems (what do you expect for £2?). Sound samplers, rather like computers, work on the principle that if you put rubbish in, you get rubbish out. Problem number one is that the input achieved via the ear socket on the back of the Spectrum does not really match up to the audio signal that you put into it from cassette. Despite several attempts by your reviewer to plug in alternative microphones or other cassette decks, the resulting playback quality of the sound sampled was, to say the least, a bit noisy.

Problem number two is that the sample sound is played back via the Spectrum's internal speaker which, as we all know, does for music what myxamatosis does for rabbits!

This is a shame because the program itself is quite good. Other problems occur with the initial recording mode. It appears that you may only enter 4 seconds of sound — it will not adjust to anything shorter. In other words, if you wish to enter one short note then you have a gap afterwards as the program doesn't give you any possibilities to chop up the sound that you have put in. This means that you are quite powerless once the sound has been loaded into the program. However, Roy Dictus is in the process of constantly re-writing his program — we received Version 7.0, an update on the listing — and in the well-documented instructions he says he is open to all suggestions, comments or criticisms.

To sum up briefly: it is quite a clever concept that requires no additional hardware but the program badly needs editing facilities as well as a better method of inputting the sound.

John Bates

SOUND MASTER is available from:
Roy Dictus
Apostelstraat 8
2000 ANTWERPEN
BELGIUM

EEK! A MOUSE

Advanced Memory Systems have just released their Mouse for the Spectrum, which comes with its own interface and software on cassette. The Mouse interface allows you to connect a centronics printer to your Spectrum as well as the mouse and the whole caboodle is compatible with *Art Studio*, the graphics package which has impressed our in-house computer artxpert, Franco Frey.

Trundling your mouse around a convenient, flat surface allows you to interact with programs running on your computer. The package comes complete with its own graphics programs to get you started, an icon designer and full instructions on incorporating mouse control in your own programs.

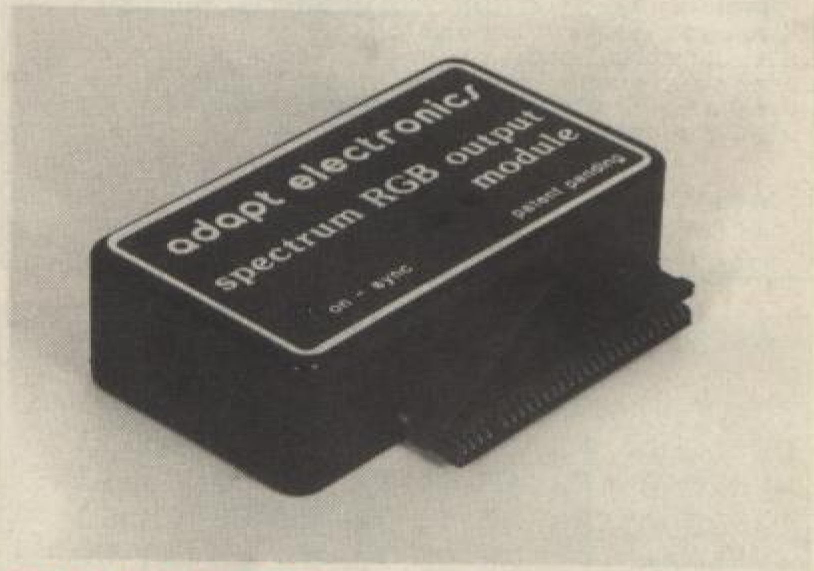
For the greater part of £70 (well, £69.95 to be precise), the AMX mouse allows you to catch your Spectrum by its bootstraps and move it towards the Apple Mackintosh league. If you thought Icons were trendy, just wait till Mouse Mania grabs hold .... Full review next issue.



ADAPTing FOR RGB

Adapt Electronics 1are now producing an interface which allows you to connect a Spectrum to any RGB monitor, TTL or Analog, for £36.95 with a through port connector, or for two pounds less without the through port.

Some early Spectrums will require three links fitting internally before the interface will get up and running. Most people should be able to plug the unit into their computer and hang a monitor straight onto the 6-pin DIN output onto the side of Adapt's RGB interface.



MAZE MASTER JOYSTICK

A new product arrives from the States, via **Vulcan**, who are marketing the *Maze Master* joystick in this country. For your £12.95 you get a nifty microswitch joystick which allows you to switch between 8 and 4 directional mode.

In brief tests, the joystick proved ideal for maze type games, and the "Rapid Fire" button billed on the side of the box gave autofire when the fire button was depressed on some games. The man at Vulcan was of the opinion that the joystick didn't, in fact, have an Autofire controller . . .

For the price, the *Maze Master* represents good value if you want a joystick that offers fine finger and thumb control — and it should prove ideal for driving cursors around in Art packages as well as for games playing.

Maybe it's time we got another Joystick Review together . . . watch these pages!

ADAPTING for FERGUSON

The RGB interface produced by **Ferguson**, the obscurely named *MA20* allows you to display your Spectrum's output on the screen of Ferguson monitor/tellies like the MC01. For a few pennies under £30 you get the RGB output together with sound and there is a Green Screen switch which takes you out of RGB full colour mode, making the screen of your Ferguson colour set emulate a Green Screen monitor. A socket on the side of the unit allows you to run one of the Ferguson Green Screen monitors direct, if you so wish.

The interface has been specially developed to run with Ferguson's own monitors and TV's — if you're thinking about getting a monitor for your computer to make the most of its visual output, you should be able to pick up the interface and a the MC01 colour telly/monitor together for around £200 if you shop around according to the man at Thorn EMI Ferguson.

TIRED OF BEEPS AND SQUAWKS?

Saga Systems may have the solution for you. Their *Sound Boost* is a tiny little doobrie which allows you to combine the Spectrum's sound output with the UHF signal sent to your telly.

Three straightforward connections have to be made to your computer's internals — three wires are attached to the little circuit board which is the *Sound Boost*. Each wire ends in a tiny clip doobrie, which has to be connected over the appropriate part of the Spectrum — no tiresome soldering, no messy connector blocks, just follow the instructions, adjust the sound output and you can put the top back on your computer and listen to your telly rather than the onboard buzzer.

All this for a mere £9.95. With a little care, you can have your Spectrum speaking loud and clear.

MORE MICRODRIVIN'

The boffins at **Mirage**, flushed with the success of their *Microdriver* have decided to launch a New Improved version.

New features include an improved loading algorithm, which means that programs saved to

drive can be loaded back into the Spectrum up to five seconds faster; a copy function that can be used to output a full 24 line screen to a ZX printer or Alphacom 32; optional display saving which reduces the file size on microdrive by 7K, meaning you can squeeze more onto a given cartridge; an enhanced POKE entry facility and a brand new DUMP function which gives access to the program in memory.

The new version of *Microdriver* doesn't come with a new price — it's still £39.95 including VAT, and if you have a version 1.0 *Microdriver* and would like an upgrade, send your unit to Mirage at 24 Bank Street, Braintree, Essex CM7 7UI with £5.95 and they'll send you a version 2.0 model by return. Nice, Eh?

AN END TO TANGLES

The chaps at **Duraplug** have come up with a whizzo wheeze to save you spending lots of money on separate plugs for all the wires that emanate from your computer, Hi-Fi or Telly/Video units.

Their *Multiline* plug, which includes a mains on indicator light, allows you to wire up to four cables into one unit. Ideal for connecting up your telly, cassette recorder and Spectrum power pack — providing you intend to keep them together. For around £5.00, the *Multiline* should save money when you want plug in several pieces of equipment in the same location permanently. Don't be daft about it though, and try to connect four electric fires together....

MICRODRIVE DOCTOR GETS A Phd?

Softschool have been adding a little polish to their *Microdrive Doctor*. The new version includes some new commands and a "much needed sector editor", as the man said. Normally available at £6.50 from LW Tomlin, 151 Millbridge, Dollis Valley Way, Barnet, Herts EN5 2UH, you might like to take advantage of the man's generosity and pay £5.50 instead. Only if you're a CRASH reader, mind!

MULTIFACETTED MULTIFACE

Following hot on the heels of *Interface III* and the *Mirage Microdriver*, **Romantic Robot** have just released there *Multiface I*. As well providing a composite video port the interface allows the user to "back up" software to tape, microdrive, disk drive and wafer drive. Unlike the some interfaces *Multiface I* dumps the software straight out on to the desired storage medium without the need for special software. Once the software has been backed up you can load it independently of *Multiface I*.

The actual use of the interface is very easy; all is required is that you load in your software and press the little red button on top of the interface, then follow the on screen prompts. So far we have found that *Multiface I* has coped with any game that has been chucked at it. Unfortunately it arrived in the office just too late for a full-scale, in-depth review — which will appear Next Niche.

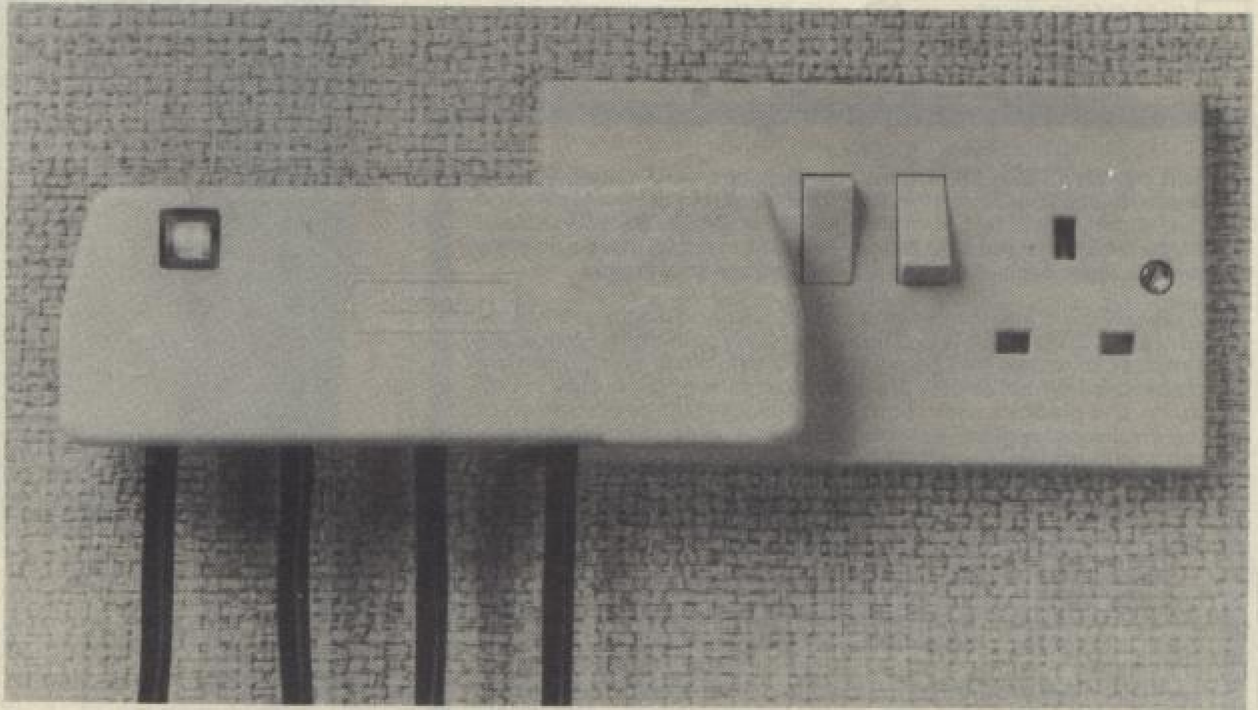
DISK CLUB PLUG

While the Tech Niche Team were at the Christmas Microfair, a Danish fellow came up to us and thrust a cassette into our hand(s). He was representing a new club that's started up in the land of Lurpak, which aims to butter up Beta Disk users by sending them four issues of a cassette based magazine every year.

To join the club, send the Danish Disk Doctors eight pounds in cash (or ten pounds by way of a cheque) and they undertake to enrol you in their club and send the cassette mags. Apart from news and views, tips and hints and such useful things, the cassettes contain utility programs to help you look at the information on track 0 (and play around with it), sector editors and deleted file recover routines to name but a few promised programs.

Per Henneberg Kristensen at
Norresobakken III
8800 Viborg
DENMARK

is the person to get in touch with if you're a lonely Beta Disk owner. Oh, and don't worry. You won't need a degree in Danish to cope with the mags . . .





BATTLE OF THE BASICS

- **Laser BASIC, £14.95 from Ocean IQ/Oasis Software, 12 Walliscote Road, Weston Super Mare, Avon BS23 1UG.**
- **Mega BASIC, £9.95 form Sportscene Specialist Press (Your Sinclair Spectrum), 14 Rathbone Place, London W1P 1DE.**
- *Beta BASIC*, £9.95 from Betasoft, 92 Oxford Road, Moseley, Birmingham B13 9SQ.

This month's TECH TIPS looks at extensions to ZX BASIC. Ocean, Betasoft and Your Spectrum (RIP) battle it out in the contest to find the ultimate set of BASIC extensions. *Laser BASIC*, *Beta BASIC*, and *Mega BASIC* **are the contenders — as it turns out there's no clear winner, since each utility has it's own unique advantages.**

ZX BASIC, built into the Spectrum ROM, is a good language for those who want to learn about programming fairly painlessly. Most of the simplest keywords can be entered at a single key press; lines are checked for syntax as they are entered and the editor is easy to use. String and graphics commands are unusually simply used. Most of the error messages are in something approaching English and you can continue after making changes to a program.

When it comes to serious use, ZX BASIC doesn't fare so well. It is very slow, especially when large programs are being run, and editing is laborious. The less common symbols and keywords are hidden in the obscure corners of the keyboard.

The best way to speed up ZX BASIC is to use a compiler — we looked at those in a previous TECH NICHE. This month's packages build on the existing language, rather than enhance what's already there. *Laser BASIC*, *Beta BASIC* and *Mega BASIC* add extra facilities and utilities. Facilities include on screen sprites (animated graphic symbols), extra commands, functions and control statements. Utilities make program editing and debugging easier. I'll start by comparing their presentation.

LASER BASIC — WHAT YOU GET

Laser BASIC is supplied in a plastic box, like a VHS video box but even bigger. The code was written by Oasis Software who produced the Forth-based graphics package *White Lightning* some time ago. The program is the flagship of Ocean's new IQ range billed as 'The secret of advanced games programming'. Look out Matthew Smith, Sandy White, and all, your secret is out! — well not quite.

For £14.95 you get two cas settes and a 90 page A5 manual printed on hideous but trendy green paper, to discourage pirates with old fashioned photocopiers. The cassettes contain the *Laser BASIC* program, two libraries of sprites, a sprite designer, a 'shop window' demonstration program and a game of three dimensional noughts and crosses which shows off the features of the system.

The manual is wrapped in a black card cover, with a useful 'bookmark' flap extended from the back cover. Something is needed to help you keep your place, since the presentation is not good — the manual is typeset, but only one size type is used throughout, and the layout makes the whole volume look like a ninety page technical appendix. The style is dull and verbose, but you do get a five page alphabetic command summary and two pages of contents list, including a useful 'tape map'. 21 pages are taken up with a commentary on the demonstration program, routine by routine.

BETA BASIC — WHAT YOU GET

Beta BASIC is also supplied in a video box, which holds another 90 page A5 manual and a single cassette. The cassette contains the *Beta BASIC* extensions and an unspectacular 'turtle graphics' demonstration.

This time the manual is printed on bright red paper — using this and *Laser BASIC* alternately is like taking part in a psychological experiment! Again the type is all a single size but this time it has been produced on a good quality daisywheel printer. Apparently, a modified version of Tasword II was used, but it is none the worse for all that. The layout is better than that of *Laser BASIC*, but still rather dull.

The style of the manual is straightforward and readable though not as good as the original Spectrum manual, mainly because of the lack of graphics. The text is divided into a summary and a reference section, with appendices to cover errors, printers, keys and special variables. There's a tow page list of contents.

Examples and observations are sprinkled through the text, and these help dilute the more technical explanations. The front cover contains a keyboard chart, showing the positions of the new commands — no overlay is provided. The back cover contains a concise syntax summary.

MEGA BASIC — WHAT YOU GET

Mega BASIC has the smallest but most readable manual of all: 30 A6 (double cassette sized) pages printed on white paper — hurrah! The single cassette contains two copies of the *Mega BASIC* system and a sprite designer. Unfortunately some one forgot to record the sprite designer onto either side of our tape, purchased (with £7.95 of real money!) at the ZX Microfair. We got a complete recording later.

The layout of the manual is good and the style is informal. It is very readable, much as it's parent magazine used to be before the Megawow Geewhizz Supaspeccy style took root. There's a five page list of commands, an (incomplete) table of error messages and a single, well organised contents page. Examples are far and few between — this manual is, sadly, better to look at than it it is to use.

USING LASER BASIC

Beta BASIC and *Laser BASIC* have a lot in common, so they are reviewed together, later in this article. *Laser BASIC* is the odd one out, so I'll discuss its unique features individually.

Laser BASIC offers no new editing facilities — it just modifies the syntax checker to allow a hundred or so new commands and functions, which must be typed in full (letter by letter) in capitals. The commands are all four letters long and start with a full stop. From **.ADJM** to **.WRBV**, they are almost all totally unmemorable and unpronouncable. Commands expect up to seven numeric parameters.

Functions are three letters long, similarly unpronouncable



and start with a question mark. Functions can only be used in assignments — not in expressions — so you have to copy them into a normal variable with **LET** before you can **PRINT** them for example.

Most of the commands are concerned with sprite graphics. As in *White Lightning* you can propel sprites of almost any size, from one character to several times larger than the screen — useful for moving backdrops in games like *Zaxxon* or *Defender*. You can do all sorts of tricks if you can remember the right command — moving, scrolling, panning, recolouring, masking, rotating, animating, enlarging, shrinking, inverting and detecting collisions — in other words, you can fiddle about with patterns on the screen in almost every conceivable way.

The rest of the system is a bit of a disappointment. There are very few new commands apart form those that deal with sprites. You can renumber programs, 'trace' the current line number, read groups of keys and **PEEK** and **POKE** two-byte values. That's all. There are no new commands for editing, sound effects or 3D perspective.

You can use procedures — routines called by name rather than line number — but the names must only contain one letter, again making programs hard to understand. Values can be passed to a procedure and changes thereafter don't affect the original variables — in Technospeak: the values of the variables are local.

The *Laser BASIC* demonstration shows that you can produce varied and attractive flicker-free graphics with the package, but the demo is not exactly 'state of the art' — it looks like a collection of snippets from simple games of a couple of years ago.

The free game is flashy, but 3D noughts and crosses is not exactly pulse-quickening stuff. The slow speed of ZX BASIC slugs the *Laser* system, making it hard to keep more than one thing moving at a time. The game is played well, using an algorithm that first appeared, as far as I know, in Practical Computing in January 1981 (page 102), though the author does not acknowledge this.

The *Laser Sprite Generator* is written in BASIC. The program is a bit slow and long winded to use, but good results can be obtained if the sprite libraries supplied are anything to go by (I can't draw). The display is rather lurid and it is a shame that you can't edit sprites with a Kempston joystick.

CAN A MEGA BEAT A BETA?

Beta BASIC is the oldest utility reviewed here, although the latest version — 3.0 — was only published this summer. In many ways it seems to have been produced in direct response to *Mega BASIC*, which rather shook up the world of Spectrum BASIC extensions when it was launched a year ago. Already *Mega BASIC* has outpaced *Beta BASIC* on the version number front — I looked at version 4.0.

Beta BASIC looks just like ZX BASIC when you first load it — even the copyright message looks like the Sinclair one which we have all come to know and love or hate . . . depending on what we were doing before it appeared.

The *Mega BASIC* start up screen is much more impressive. The program name, version and author appear on the top of the screen. The ink is yellow on black. The bottom line contains an indication of the mode (the cursor is now a solid block) and whether or not CAPS LOCK is enabled.

TYPING PRACTICE

Both systems let you dispense with the Spectrum's keyword entry scheme, which is great if you've got a proper keyboard — I used a Fuller FDS. In *Mega BASIC* you have to type all the commands letter by letter although they can be abbreviated to their first few letters followed by a full-stop.

Beta BASIC lets you select normal keyword entry (the extra keywords are accessed from graphics mode) or letter-by-letter typing, or an ingenious mixture of both which I used most of the time. In the mixed mode, keywords at the start of a statement can be typed as normal, or type letter by letter if preceded by a space — a natural action for a touch typist. The mixed mode is convenient since it means that common commands — **LET**, **PRINT**, **GO TO** and so on — can be typed with one press, and the rest can be typed out with no need to look down and search for the required keyword.

Both *BASIC*s provide user defined keys — so a group of characters can be produced when the appropriate 'key' is pressed. In *Beta BASIC* you must press symbol shift and space, then a letter or digit. *Mega BASIC* expects you to select extended mode then type a shifted digit.

Both *BASIC*s improve the performance of the line editor. They allow you to edit lines by number — you don't have to **LIST** them first. They also let you move quickly through a line with the up and down keys as well as left and right, and provide a short-cut to the start or end of a line.

In *Beta BASIC* you have to press Enter before changing the current line, whereas you change it by typing the **AND** and **OR** symbols in *Mega BASIC*. *Mega BASIC* also gives you a second 'copy' cursor — like the BBC Micro — which can be moved independently with a rather strange group of keys; characters can be copied from the position of this cursor to the other with a shifted keypress. *Beta BASIC* won't do this, but it does let you join and split lines at will.

Beta BASIC tokenises lines rather slowly, but you soon get used to the slight pause after you hit Enter. It lets you put premature line-feeds into a listing (so that lines don't just run from one margin to another) but this can cause confusion when editing as the 'extra' text is not always cleared from the display.

I think that BBC Micro enthusiasts will probably prefer the *Mega BASIC* editor, but I preferred the *Beta BASIC* one because of the facility to join lines and the neat listings — *Beta BASIC* indents loops and tests for you automatically if asked to do so — this time *Beta BASIC* collects a BBC Micro feature. One big snag with *Mega BASIC* is the fact that that you can't always re-edit an incorrect line— sometimes you just get a 'Bad Line' message and have to type the lot again. Ugh!

The *Mega BASIC* keywords are not easily mastered since they almost all end with underscores — Symbol Shift Zero, if you've never needed one before — for no obvious reason. This is taking QL emulation too far. *Mega BASIC* is also needlessly fussy about the space character in instructions such as OPEN # and GO TO.

BLOCK STRUCTURE

Both *BASIC*s provide some facilities for writing block structured, modular programs, but *Mega BASIC* features are not very substantial. You can define procedures (which must have names starting with an AT sign) but these can't be typed as commands and local variables aren't allowed. Simple **REPEAT UNTIL** loops are the only new control structure.

Beta BASIC provides a range of facilities that would satisfy even an ALGOL 86 programmer (ALGOL 86 is a language so comprehensive that no one has

implemented it fully yet, and they've been trying for 18 years!). It's a computer scien tist's dream: you get named procedures, local or reference parameters with default values if they're not supplied; you can pass lists of parameters for sequential processing. There's multi line **IF THEN ELSE**, a general purpose looping construct which allows exit from any point, and these structures can be nested arbitrarily.

Beta BASIC even speeds up a few ZX BASIC commands. Some aspects of ZX BASIC slow up alarmingly as program size increases. *Beta BASIC* avoids this, so that **FOR** loops, **GO TOs**, **GO SUBs** and **RETURNS** can be increased in speed by a factor of up to twenty times in long programs. This effect is, of course, largely swamped by the execution time for other statements, but it is still a nice feature.

You get long and short (single statement) forms of **ON GO TO** and **ON GO SUB**, which brings me to the only missing feature I could think of: *Beta BASIC* has no **SELECT** or **CASE** statement.

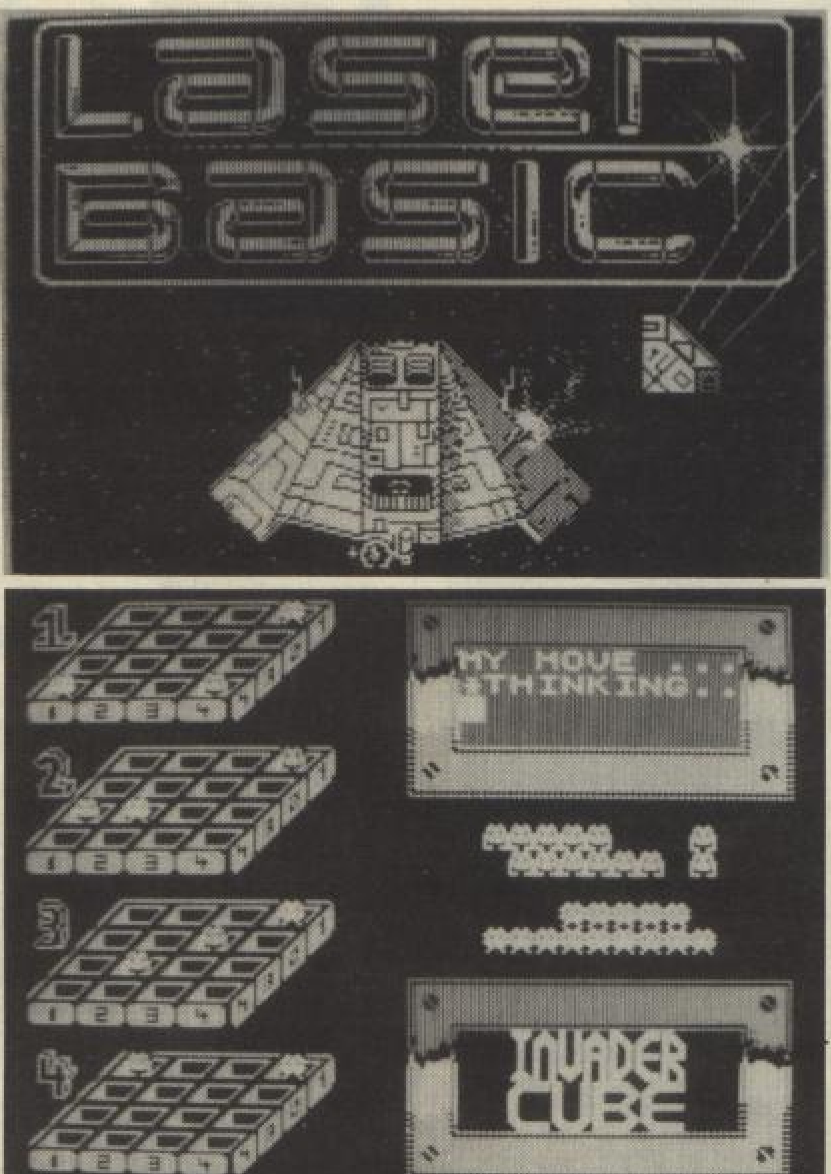
UNIQUE FEATURES — BETA BASIC

It would take a whole CRASH Christmas Special to list all the unique features of *Beta BASIC*, but they include commands to sort and shuffle rows from string and numeric arrays. There are new integer functions and operators such as **MOD** and bitwise **OR**, and there are some fast but low precision trigonometric functions. It is a shame that the new function are typed in as **DEF**ined **FN**s since this reduces the number of user defined functions you can use.

Clever print-formatting is allowed for neat tables of figures. There's an optional clock display, with an alarm, and a command which passes characters to the command line as though they were typed in — the ultimate in self-writing software. The contents of memory can be treated like an enormous string array, allowing all sorts of neat tricks.

The *Beta BASIC* toolkit lets you list lines, groups of lines, variables, key definitions and procedures. You can search out and replace information in a program, renumber, save and delete groups of lines. You can delete groups in *Mega BASIC* but the rest of these tricks are beyond it.

Beta BASIC graphics commands include a **FILL** function which colours bounded areas of the screen for you. Filling is fairly fast and you even get a count of the number of points filled. Graphics can be shifted and scaled within a window and you can use absolute co-ordi makes it rather sluggish but decent results can be obtained



LASER BASIC is the only really photogenic program amongst the BASICs reviewed here — so here's a couple of snaps from the demo software

with a bit of effort.

Machine code support is noticably absent from *Beta BASIC*, presumably because it is considered unnecessary. *Mega BASIC* gives you a small but useful 'front panel' to control machine code and an extended **CALL** statement which allows parameters to be passed to machine code but not returned.

User defined graphics can be designed in a single *Mega BASIC* statement; as far as I know this is a neat trick from the Memotech repertoire. Strings can be printed down, rather than across the page and large characters can be printed in fuzzy, 'stippled' colours. Screen output can be redirected to machine code or a printer; in fact it's very easy to do this in ZX BASIC if you know the right command.

The main *Mega BASIC* system includes a tape header reader which prints the details of tape files. There's also a rather dangerous cassette file copier that destroys your current program and crashes the machine if the file concerned is more than 20K long!

Mega BASIC is generally frustrating to use if you make a mistake. The commands don't check their parameters properly, so silly mistakes can cause weird results or even crash the machine. The manual pleads lack of memory but my verdict is lack of effort and poor software design.

SHARED FEATURES

Both systems let you divert execution to a subroutine when each end of line is reached by in the main program. This can be very useful when debugging. They both have a facility to trap errors and disable break-ins from the key board but *Mega BASIC* can't trap Interface 1 errors or — more mysteriously — the error codes it generates itself! Both offer two-byte **PEEK** and **POKE** instructions, and can provide automatic line numbers.

Both *BASICs* are associated with magazines. The glossy monthly Your Sinclair is owned by the publishers of *Mega BASIC* and has contained several articles based around the system in Your Spectrum days. The *Beta BASIC* magazine is less pretty but more substantial. It consists of fourteen typed pages crammed with neat routines and tips for *Beta BASIC* users. A six issue subscription costs £5.50

Windows have definitely arrived — *Beta BASIC* and *Mega BASIC* allow you to restrict display output to a limited area of the screen and dial up a range of character sizes, including a Tasword-style 64 characters per line. Areas of the screen can be scrolled smoothly in all direc tions, or saved for later re-display in various sizes. The attribute grid can be blasted in various ways, for special effects. Printing can be offset from the grid so you can position text with pixel accuracy.

Only *Mega BASIC* lets you select between three possible typefaces — Spectrum, BBC and Amstrad character shapes. Of course you can redefine the characters in *Beta BASIC* or normal, boring ZX BASIC with just a few **POKE**s, but this superficial *Mega BASIC* advantage haunts the machine. A system running *Mega BASIC* just doesn't seem like a Spectrum when you use it. *Beta BASIC* is more subtle, and doesn't immediately appear to have changed the nature of the machine. Some people will choose *Mega BASIC* on the basis of this feature alone — it all depends how much you like the Sinclair style.

Both systems take up a lot of memory — about 20K — which is inconvenient for business users. It's a shame the publishers don't let you choose a subset of the commands, as you used to be able to do on the venerable ZXED toolkit from Dk'tronics.

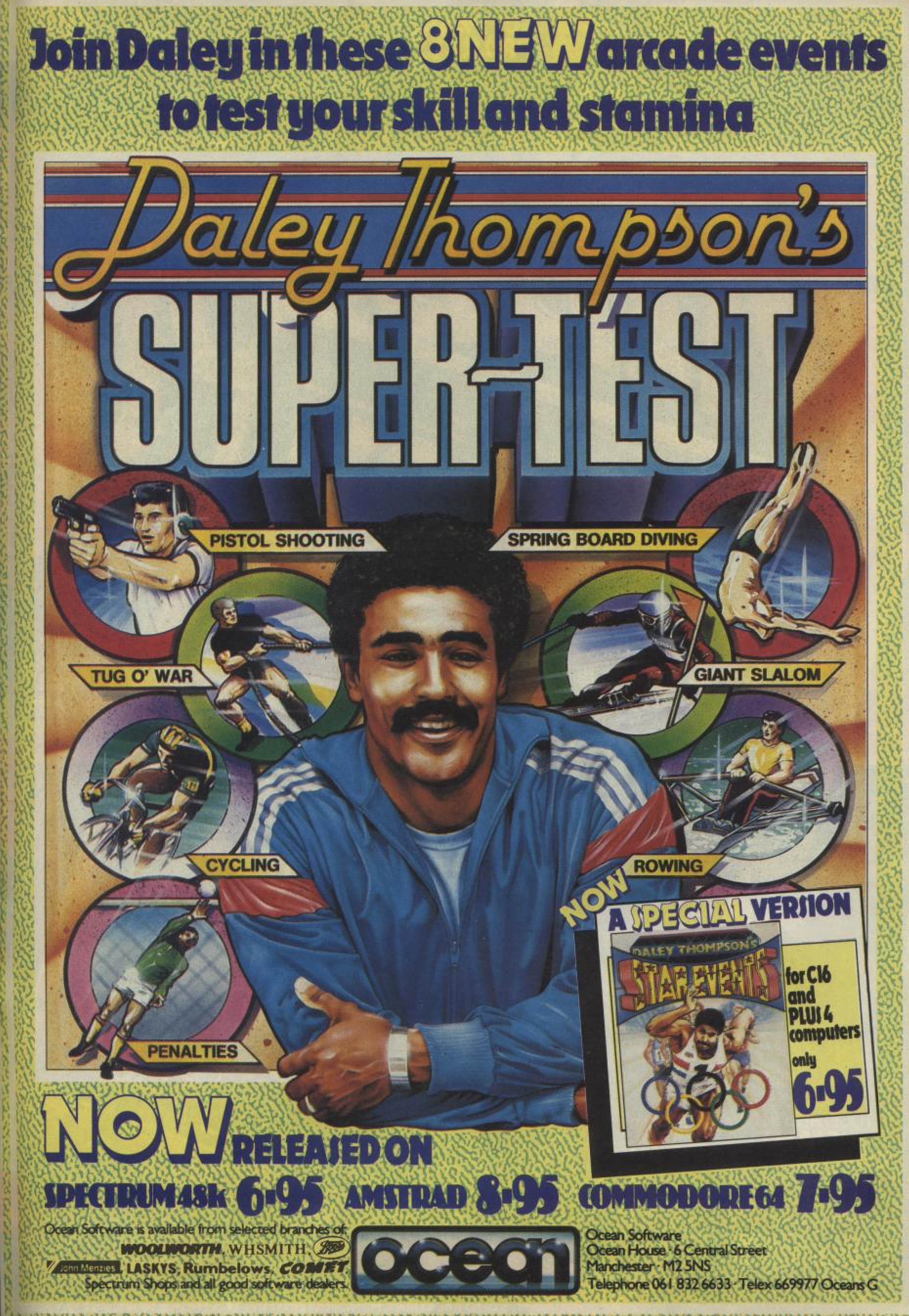
WINDING UP

Mega BASIC and *Beta BASIC* are both recommended to those who want to inject new life, and perhaps a little excitement, into their ZX BASIC programming. Both systems are very powerfull and usable, though the publishers of *Mega BASIC* really ought to tidy up its error-handling.

I preferred *Beta BASIC*, mainly because of its elegance and comprehensive support for software engineering: the Spectrum was designed, oddly enough, as a programmer's machine rather than a games one (hence no joystick port, poor sound, friendly BASIC, microdrives, limited colour etc). *Beta BASIC* takes the Spectrum a long way onward as a programmer's machine. Others may be drawn by the multi-tasking, the machine code support and graphical gloss of *Mega BASIC*.

If you want to push pixels around the screen then *Laser BASIC* is great, but the code needed is hard to read and hard to debug. At present you can't use *Laser BASIC* in commercial games without infringing Ocean's copyright, but a run time system, misleadingly called the *Laser BASIC Compiler* should be available for £9.95 by the time you read this. I don't expect that there will be many takers.


COSMIC
WARTOAD
SPECTRUM 48k
7·95
CW
Free our heroine from certain death..beat the clock on the GALACTIC GUILLOTINE!
On-Screen Combat Windows speed you through the UNIVERSAL TIME-GRID.
Battle against the RYGELLIAN SLIME-BEASTS at the edge of time!
Designed by DENTON...
for Extra-Terrestrial Entertainment!
ocean
Ocean House · 6 Central Street · Manchester · M2 5NS
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SCOOBY DOOBY DOO (Burp!)

What a recipe writing lot you are! We should start a new magazine called CRASH CREATIVE COOKERY and make sure that Auntie Denise makes regular Page Three appearances for us. We could have a really hoopy reader-driven 'zine. Hmmmm . . .

No-one here in the Towers quite realised what a bunch of culinary experts we have for readers when we set you the task of designing some Jem and Scooby snacks. Well done indeed.

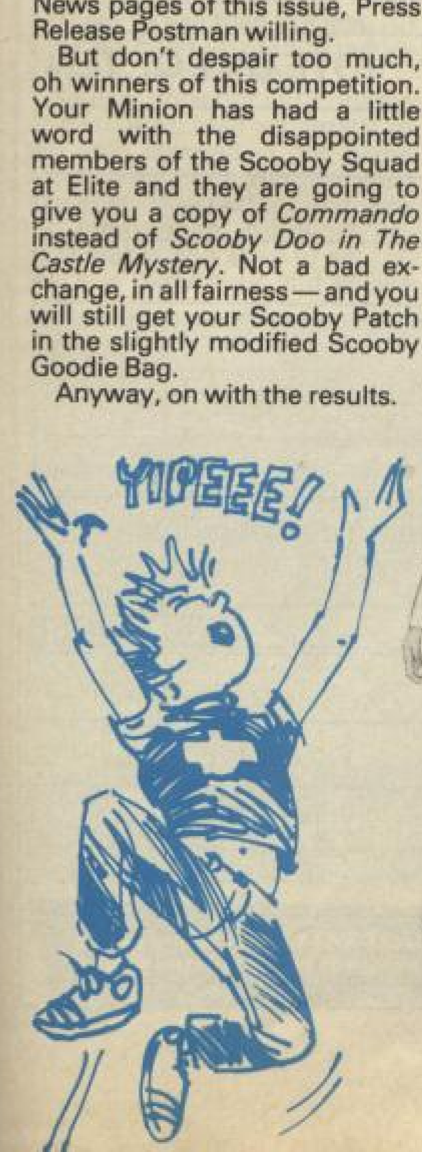
The softies up in ART were so impressed by some of your entries that they just insisted that we should devote some space to them. So here's a small selection of the dishes that might be served in Ludlow branch of the Scooby Doo restaurant chain.

Sadly, Elite have abandoned *Scooby Doo* for the moment — they were having difficulty fitting the whole game into 48K's worth of Spectrum and may wait until the 128K machine arrives. A full story should appear in the News pages of this issue, Press Release Postman willing.

But don't despair too much, oh winners of this competition. Your Minion has had a little word with the disappointed members of the Scooby Squad at Elite and they are going to give you a copy of *Commando* instead of *Scooby Doo in The Castle Mystery*. Not a bad exchange, in all fairness — and you will still get your Scooby Patch in the slightly modified Scooby Goodie Bag.

Anyway, on with the results.







Nick Brown

Our magazine is printed in Carlisle. Which is where Howard doesn't live even though his second name is Carlisle. A mean munchie designer he certainly is, wherever he abides (or abodes). Well done, matey.

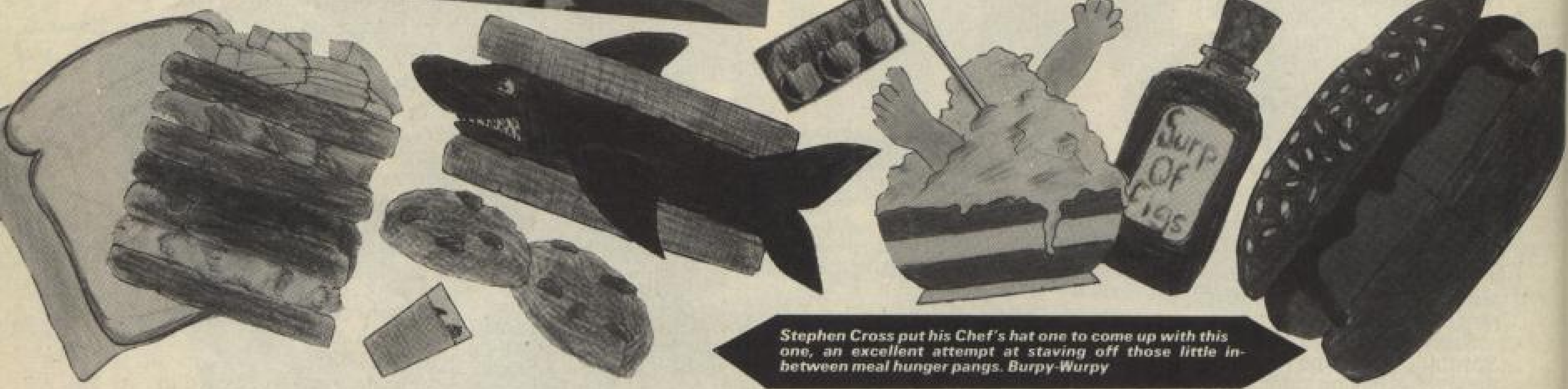


WINNERS WINNERS WINNERS



Something by way of Opening Horse, or whatever the Frenchipoos people mean on their posh menus when they write 'Hors D'Oeuvres''. Beats me why people immediately think it's a classy joint just because the menu's all in Frenchipoos. Phil Gill was the man behind this one.

Neil Adamson, Doncaster Rd, DN7 6AD; Philip Aldis, Ardgowan Rd, SE6 1UU; Stephen Arnold, Dial House Lane, CV5 7LP; Wayne Birch, White Cottage, LN7 6NP; Nick Brown, High St, GU10 4BS; Richard Butterfield, Gold Street, S70 1TU; Howard Carlisle, Alexandra Road, LS18 4HD; Sean Carroll, Langdale Rd, L15 3LB; Desmond Corrigan, Valley Walk, WD3 3TA; Stephen Cross, St James' Place, PR6 0NA; A Daley, Colleymoor Leys Lane, NG11 8JD; Leo Device and Mark Shirra, Sunnyside Parc, Cornwall; Robert Drinkall, Juniper Rd, SL7 3NX; R Ellis, Ashworth Park, Cheshire; C Fogg, Oxford Rd, W4 3DH; Christopher Garnett, Thornes Park, HD6 3DA; Chris Gavin, Knotty Ash, L14 5NX; Philip Gill, The Old Orchard, W Sussex; David Gorton, Revidge Rd, BB1 8DJ; Stephen Harpur, Mapas Rd, Ireland; Sam Harris, Rayleigh Rd, SW19 3RE; Chris Hewitt, Wheatley Rd, LS29 8TS; John Hill, Crediton Close, NN3 3AJ; Mark Holmes, Gouge Ave, DA11 8DP; Aaron Huggett, Woodlands Close, DE2 5DZ; David Jackson, Landsmoor Dr, PR4 5PE; Paul Jones, Chestnut Drive, NN14 2TP; Ian Lacey, Orchard Cottage, NR15 1QL; Thomas Lennon, Kingstanding Rd, B44 8LB; Mark Thompson, Torogay Street, G22 7EF; Leo McKibbins, The Readings, CM18 7BU; Stephen McLoed, Oldgate, NE61 1QF; Jim McMullen, Stenhouse Drive, EH11 3NN; Alex Morris, Barnaby Rudge, CM1 4YG; Adam Nightingale, Gipsy Rd, Welling, KENT; The Artistic Occupant, Garner Rd, E17 4HG; David Owens, Dublin Rd, BT74 6HN; Mickey Pietrzak, Winthorp House, London, W12 7QB; Darren Porter, Bridgewater Rd, NN13 6BY; Goncalo Reis, Rua Tomas Figueiredo, 1500 Lisboa, Portugal; Karl Rowe, Marlborough Rd, DY3 1BR; Daniel Salem, Kingsway, SK8 1QR; John Sims, Laburnham Rd, UB3 4JY; Mark Thompson, Torogay St, G22 7EF; Stephen Vaudin, Westholm Ave, SK4 5BE; Paul Wakeling, Castell Drive, LE5 0DE; Matthew Wilkinson, Dale Cottage, TN6 3AE; Stefan Wood, Fraser Rd, UB6 7AL; Richard Wright, Hall Rd, DE13 9BX



Stephen Cross put his Chef's hat one to come up with this one, an excellent attempt at staving off those little in-between meal hunger pangs. Burpy-Wurpy

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2	
3	
4	
5	

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2	
3	
4	
5	

FRNTLINE

WAVE UPON WAVE OF DEMENTED AVENGERS

It seems my review of Lothlorien's *Waterloo* (CRASH 23) has stirred up a little controversy — well, criticism at least. Some interesting points were raised in the Frontline postbag. I was pulled up for my use of the term 'indirect fire' — in the plaintiff's words, 'flak' was deserved for that. My mind was obviously in a different universe. I never meant to suggest Napoleon had radar assisted firepower. Sorry. The defence rests, humbly.

A keelhauling by post then followed for my suggestion that the game was historically accurate, despite Napoleon's forces being given an extra corps. In the review, I took pains to point out that the *rest* of the game was historically accurate and the results were realistic. Somehow, I felt my accuser hadn't played the game — if that's the case, he's missing out.

Another correspondent had a go at my rating for authenticity, raising historical point after historical point — many of which were more explicit versions of the criticisms made in the review itself. Lothlorien had some of the wrong commanders with the wrong units, as the author of this letter informed me. This is true, but not ultimately important. Sorry, but having a blunder like radar assisted weaponry would be! Names do not affect realistic combat, nor order sequence, completion, or any of the other factors the game possesses.

In conclusion: *Waterloo* and *Austerlitz* should both have been given the CRASH Smash label. Why this logo wasn't applied is beyond me, except that there's a rumour that Layout are spending a year dead on Mars for tax reasons ... At least they can relax this month. Why? Read on!

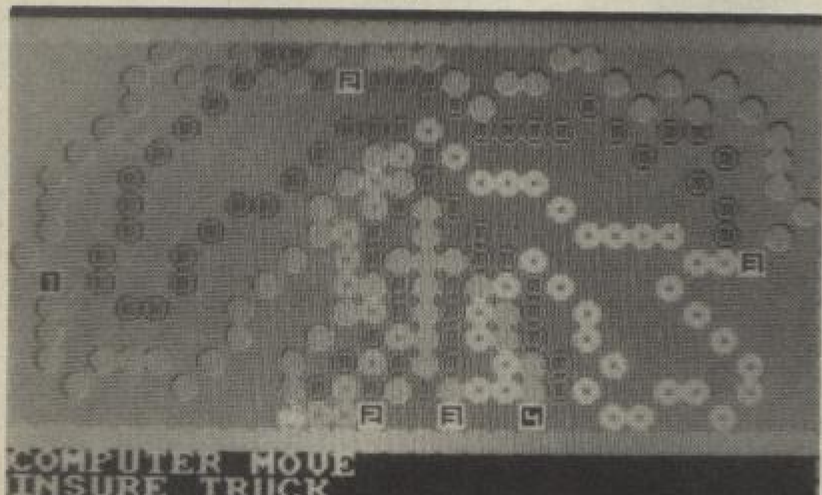
THE TRADING GAME

Producer: Reelax Games
Retail Price: **£7.95**

This is the first Reelax offering for the Spectrum. It is, as the title suggests, a trading game for one to three players (rather confusingly, the instructions and prompts mention two to four players but this includes the computer as a player). Each player controls supplies of food, oil and textiles in a warehouse. To win, these first have to be transported to nearby towns where demand for different goods varies and then traded successfully.

While coping with rising interest rates, keeping the unions happy, and dealing with random transport problems you will be faced with minor disasters every so often. Three modes of transport are are available to you: truck, barge and tanker. Taken in that order, each mode is more expensive but potentially more efficient to use than the last. All vehicles need insurance before they may be put to use.

Screen presentation consists of a colour coded schematic of the area covered in the game below which is a window used to display play options and textual information. It's most unremarkable and slow to set up, but it is fairly clear and allows rapid interaction with the computer.



The abstract map of THE TRADING GAME is the only really intruiging feature of the game.

The game starts by setting up the number of players (whether or not the computer will play) and number of weeks the game has to last. Play then proceeds to player one's first move (this is the computer's move if it's used as a player). A number of actions are possible. Checking market prices and current stocks, insuring vehicles, loading and unloading vehicles, hiring personnel, taking out a loan and actually moving the vehicles are all possible at this point.

Unfortunately, there is little point in doing any of them. Vehicles may only move up to 60 miles per week and cost £90 per ten miles for the cheapest form of transport. Food and other commodities have ridiculous prices and various 'rival companies' offer insanely high prices to buy them off you. It's possible to win the game without actually doing anything at all (as I did on one occasion). Some of the random disasters are close to the mark: ten of my employees were found smoking drugs in the warehouse! I can't help feeling that such things are at least a little out of place in a game of this nature.

There are more problems, but I wonder whether it's worth going into that much detail. When you finally win — something that isn't likely to cause to much trouble, the reward is a prompt for either a new game or program kill. There's no realism at all. Worse, there's no incentive to play. Nothing provides enough challenge and the whole thing becomes a mind numbing sequence of repetitive tedium. Some good ideas are let down by simplistic programming and the game's few good points are lost in the malaise as a result.

PRESENTATION 25%
Simple but neat — until the game loads.
RULES 43%
Actually not very good in terms of providing a worthwhile game but at least they are very well explained.
PLAYABILITY 49%
Highly playable if you can stand it.
GRAPHICS 37%
Clear but primitive.
AUTHENTICITY 18%
The rating is optimistic
VALUE FOR MONEY 22%
How eight pounds can be asked for this, I don't know ...
OVERALL 23%
Miss it.

JUST IMAGINE

Producer: Central Solutions
Retail Price: **£3.99**

Just Imagine ... a game by David Lester, a man familiar to computer strategists, although he is normally associated with reviewing games rather than supplying material for review. His game, *Just Imagine* is slightly reminiscent of *Software Star* in that you have to run a software company successfully until £500,000 pure profit has been made.

Procedures are handled very differently to those in *Software Star* however. Initially your company has £2,500 in the bank. Games have to be bought rather than developed. Each month a selection of three software titles is presented along with percentage probabilities for success. Each program belongs to one of five categories: Strategy; Simulation; Arcade; Adventure and Utility. After selecting one of the programs available, an offer has to be made on the royalty payment for the author. Don't be mean — if your offer is too derisory, the author will take his game elsewhere and you incur £750 in costs.

Once a game has been obtained, a retail price needs to be selected. There is an upper limit of £15.00 on the price, so this reflects the current market fairly well. Packaging has to be bought and this is available in varying qualities. An option to buy the services of a cover artist is also presented. Then advertising (in terms of pages bought) is handled and number of copies to be made that month needs to be determined. At this point, various random elements enter the game. These are presented as news items in a magazine. At one point, I was told that burglars had wrecked some company equipment and stolen copies of the game — but they thought they were so bad that they returned them! Sometimes however, good news is the order of the day and this can influence the next stage of the game.

You are given a choice of marketing managers. One of them is expensive but efficient, offering all kinds of promotions for the product from TV interviews to buying a celebrity's name to support the game. The other choice is a little cheaper, but the kind of services he offers are more suspect to say the least. Anything goes, from bribing reviewers to sabotaging other companies' efforts. In fact his chart is used to show the position of the game later in month. Get involved with this guy though, and the chances are he will be caught and your company reputation takes a dent as a result. The last choice is simply to avoid a marketing man altogether, but this means any chances of extra publicity for that month will be missed.

Eventually, the number of copies sold during the month becomes known and the top five games are displayed with your game and its position shown below (assuming it failed to make the top five). After that, revenue is determined alongside costs incurred for the month. It's only at this point that the difficulties of this game really become apparent. The bankers are evidently unwilling to supply much credit (even though this is a necessity for most companies) and debt at this stage generally results in the end of the game. There is the chance to sell off any games you have to other companies to cut your losses but this measure rarely works.

This approach makes the game very difficult. With little chance of survival for more than a month without an immediate success in the charts, a good feature would have been the chance to restart from scratch at any point. Instead it's necessary to play right through to the end of a month before getting the proverbial boot. Another problem of the game is its speed. Little tunes are often played before different section of the game commence. These are usually quite pleasant but become irritating nonetheless because of the wait involved while they play. Another wait is necessary while the charts for the month are being sorted out. A message does appear asking you to be patient, but the whole process could and should have been implemented faster.

The game has its plus points as well. When certain decisions are made, the computer sends a little message to comment on them. Sometimes it agrees with your pricing policy and at other times, it comes up with comments like, 'Oh dear. I don't think that's quite the right price for this but let's see.' At the end of the day however, I was disappointed. Initially I was impressed. There seemed to be more attention to rather simplistic and inaccurate *Software Star* but the game has problems all of its own. Speed (or lack of it), inflexibility in play and an unfortunately abrupt end make this a frustrating game.

There's a sense of humour pervading the game which does a good job at making some cynical digs at the worst side of the software industry, but none of its excitement come through either. I'm afraid that this game is unsatisfying to play despite some of its more interesting features.

As an added incentive, the inlay states that if you achieve a pure profit in excess of £500,000 on the game, you will receive 'rights' to a game called *Laser Shoot*. It seems you will receive a copy of the game to do with as you wish ...

PRESENTATION 56%
Easy to learn through play but little in the way of packaging or options.
RULES 54%
Dubious quality but straightforward once you become accustomed to the game.
PLAYABILITY 45%
Easy to get started but difficult to make a game last.
GRAPHICS N/A
Pure text only.
AUTHENTICITY 58%
Some aspects of the game reflect the mechanisms of the industry but too many are glossed over.
VALUE FOR MONEY 58%
About as much as you could really charge for this.
OVERALL 59%
Something of interest for those prepared to persevere but otherwise lacking in satisfaction and entertainment because of the abortive nature of play.

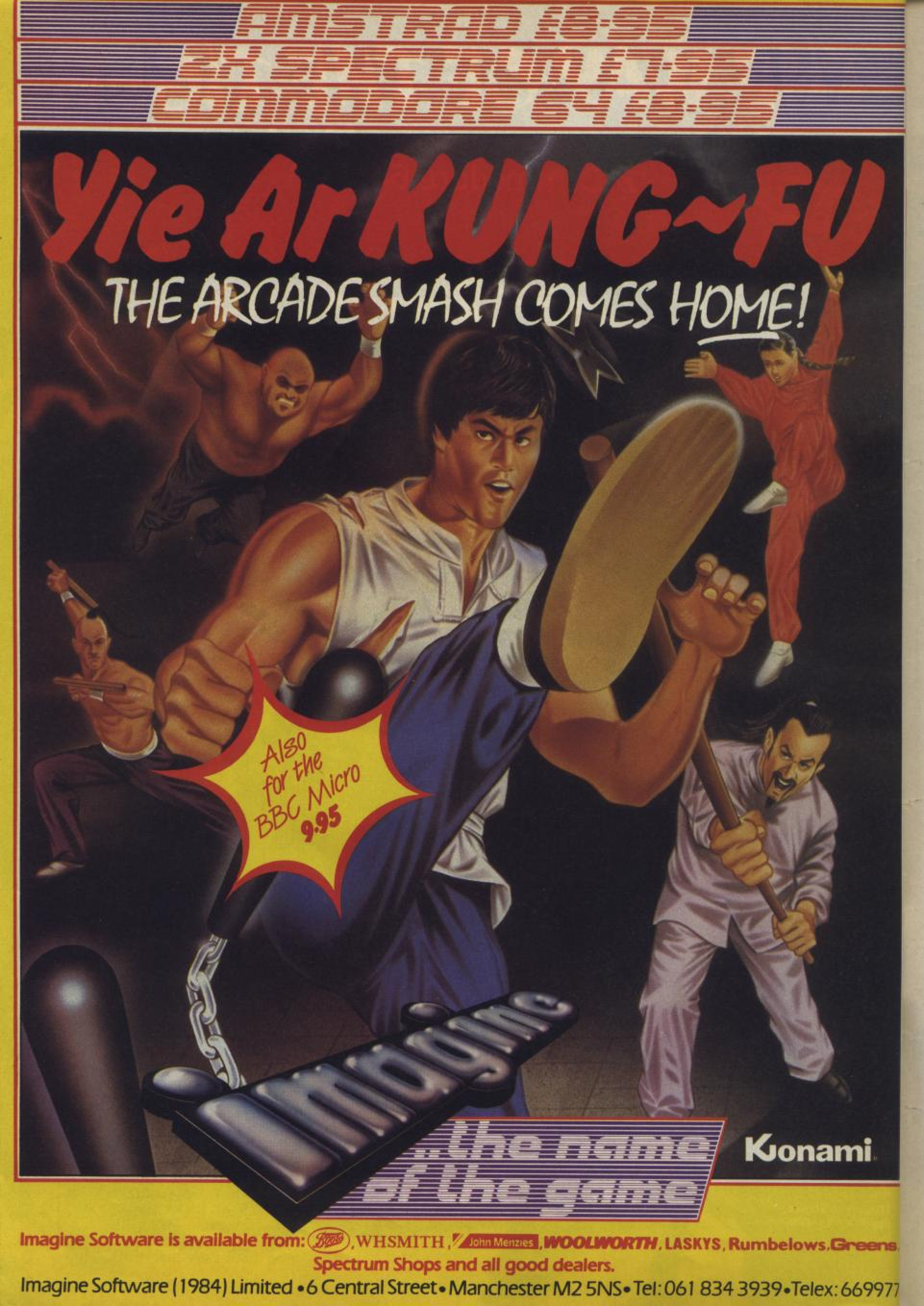
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DEATHWAKE

Producer: QUICKSILVA
Retail price: **£7.95**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Binary Design Limited**



Deathwake is a sort of *Beach Head I/II* type game which throws you in an ongoing war situation. Following the true 'war hero' storybooks you're completely outnumbered and have to take on the entire enemy force single handed

The story goes like this: the enemy hold vast areas of the homeland in the north and west and are one step away from completing research which will give them the atomic bomb. Needless to say, if they make The Bomb, the war will not continue for very much longer . . . Allied attempts to destroy the research plant have failed, owing to the fact that it is built into the side of a mountain, deep inland along a narrow inlet. Air attacks have proved useless and there have been no survivors from the three commando raids. There's one hope remaining — you, the Captain of the battleship **Undaunted**.

Research has shown that it is possible to enter the narrow inlet and destroy the plant by firing upwards under the protective shield of the mountain. However, this is a task of epic proportions and the odds are stacked against you as you prepare for the voyage . . .

The game is broken up into several different arcade sequences like *Beach Head*, and in between each arcade screen is an air attack phase. Here a map is shown of both the allied and enemy territory along with all the airfields, radar stations, ports and so on. What the player has to do is try to take out as many enemy emplacements as possible by allocating targets to his own airfields. Once the targets have been selected the aircraft can be scrambled and sent on their missions. The computer decides the damage caused, shows the results and then puts the player into an arcade sequence.

The first of these sequences is an attack from enemy aircraft. On this screen the Undaunted and her two escort ships have to thwart wave after wave of torpedo-dropping aircraft by shooting them down. The ships and planes are viewed from above and a *Missile Command* type cursor is used to target the shells from the ships. When an aircraft gets near to the ships it drops its torpedo, which has to be avoided otherwise the ship sustains damage. The two escort ships are dispensable and are lost if one torpedo hits them. The Undaunted, on the other hand, is vital to your mission, and can only be hit three times before she sinks.

If the player manages to get past this screen then another air attack phase follows. The next arcade sequence is a 3D view from the boat and puts you under fire from patrol boats. These move along the horizon, turn and sweep towards you before releasing their torpedoes. The only way to survive this screen is to sink the patrol boats before they launch their torpedoes. This is done by using your guns which can be moved up, down, left and right.

The third screen is another view from above, only this time the player has to guide the Undaunted through a minefield — a collision with a mine and the game ends.

Finding the correct elevation is the key to the fourth screen, as you try to sink the three battleships blocking the entrance to the inlet. Whilst you're doing that they're busy pounding you with shells, so speed is again of the essence.

The final screen is very similar to that in *Beach Head*. Again getting the right elevation wins the day; this time the player has to get a shell through the doors of the research plant before they close — not an easy task by any means, but then winning a war single handed never is.

CRITICISM

● **'Although being very similar to Beach Head I think this is definitely the better of the two. For a start it is far more difficult, and it also has more depth to the game. The graphics are very good, avoiding attributes well and the rotating Quicksilva logo on the title screen is amazing. Deathwake is an excellent game, very addictive and gives a challenge which although not impossible will have players going for quite some time before completing their task.'**

● *'Remember* Beach Head, *that sort of semi-strategy arcade game? Well,* Death Wake *is quite similar in format and content. This is all very well if you liked* Beach Head, *but by today's standards the game looks a bit dated. The graphics are neat but not very effective or impressive, neither is the sound.* Death Wake *is not very easy to get into, the first strategic stage is alright but the second, where your destroyer is under attack, proves to be very difficult to overcome. If you're willing to persevere with the game it may prove rewarding but for me, the later stages still seemed as dull as the earlier ones.'*

● 'When I first saw this game I thought it was another *Beach Head*, but after a few games I realised that this was better than *Beach Head* and had that certain addictive quality. The game starts off with a very nice attack sequence, all driven by the cursor, which I thought was very neat. When I got into the game (which took quite a time) it turned out to be quite easy to play, with some very close pixel shaves in the torpedo sequence. All the stages are pretty simple in concept but are fairly difficult to get through without a bit of practise. One very nice touch is the Design/Design style high-score board which is good to read after you've smashed and bashed the enemies into the ocean.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: definable
Joystick: Kempston, Interface 2, Cursor
Keyboard play: not too bad
Use of colour: simple on most screens
Graphics: some nice 3D effects, overall pretty good
Sound: a couple of woo-woos, plips and plops
Skill levels: gets harder as you get into the game
Screens: five arcade and one air sequence screen
General rating: excellent if you like *Beach Head* style games.

Use of computer	74%
Graphics	72%
Playability	77%
Getting started	72%
Addictive qualities	74%
Value for money	75%
Overall	**76%**

SOUL OF A ROBOT

Producer: Mastertronic
Retail price: **£1.99**
Language: **machine code**
Author: **Stephen N Curtis and Mark Jacobs**

Remember *Nonterraqueous*? The game with the name that everyone practised pronouncing in secret until they got it off pat and then amazed their friends with lines like "I was playing *Nonterraqueous* the other day".

Soul of a Robot is *Nonterraqueous Two* — in *Nonterra One* you failed in your mission to destroy the evil dictator computer controlling the planet Nonterraqueous. The little rotodroid fellow didn't get through, and now the evil computer that runs things is getting really mean. The computer is becoming more and more unstable as time goes on and the planet's inhabitants are getting more and more worried — the computer's threatened to self destruct any day now, and if it goes up, so does the planet. Sudden death for everyone, so Plan B swung into action.

The people of the planet built a robot, a robot with a built in bomb and the mind of a man. That mind — the robot's soul — is in torment. All it wants to do is end the mental pain by exploding its on-board bomb and destroying itself. Cunningly, the people who built this robot programmed it to self-destruct only when it was very close to the nasty computer. Close enough to destroy the machine that threatens the very existence of the planet. Your mission is to guide this tormented, bomb-carrying robot through the maze to the evil pile of binary bits.

The playing area is a 16 x 16 maze, dived into three sections. You can only move between sections by teleport, and you have to find the transporter key to activate the system. You're cast into the first section and you must find a way through to the third section, where the evil hardware is lurking. Each of the cells in the maze occupies several screens, so the game takes place in a large environment. As you might expect, there is a host of obstacles and creatures which bar your way, and apart from route planning, some pretty nifty manoeuvres are called for.

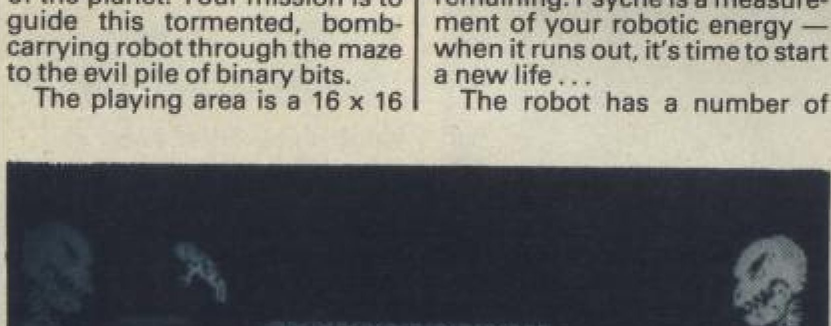


As you pass the edge of a screen the display flicks to the next location. Only the top two thirds of the display is taken up by the interior of the current cavern — the bottom third displays status information, including how many of the five lives you began with are remaining, the level of the maze you are in and the amount of 'psyche' remaining. Psyche is a measurement of your robotic energy — when it runs out, it's time to start a new life . . .

The robot has a number of different modes of transport. Its most basic movement is left and right along the floor of the different caverns. Jumping is in true *Underwurlde* style, with the hero taking a flying leap every time you press up or run off the edge of a platform. The force with which you jump can be altered with the W key, and a bar in the status area indicates how powerfully you are set to spring. If you wiggle the joystick up and down in a *Decathalon* style frenzy, the robot waves his arms manically, and he takes flight each arm stroke pushing him higher into the air. The trouble is that this somewhat jerky flying method drains psyche . . . so should be used sparingly. Taking to great a tumble can prove fatal, too and once you start falling it's too late to flap your arms.

When you start the game, pressing fire has no effect. You've got a gun, but no ammunition, so if you want to make life a little easier for yourself, Task One should be to find some ammo and pick it up.





CRITICISM

● **'Controlling the robot is the only thing that spoils this game, as jumping without being knocked off course is exceptionally hard. As a result, the game is rendered a bit unplayable as it takes a good bit of trial jumping before you get anywhere. Graphically,** Soul of a Robot **is good — your man moves fairly well, although things slow down when there is a lot happening on screen. The backgrounds are very good, colourful and, as far as I can tell, each one is unique. I think you would have to put a lot of practise into this one before it became much fun.'**

● *'I was pleased to find an excellent loading screen: unusual in £1.99 games. The game too is excellent — a good follow up to* Nonterraqueous, *which was one of the first good cheapo games to appear. Lots of big colourful graphics bounce happily around the screen, which, despite the clashes, look very neat. Lots of rooms are provided for those who like a big game, there's plenty of opportunity to bounce around just for fun. Overall I found the game pretty playable and addictive — well worth £1.99.*

● 'I wasn't overly impressed with Nonterradoobries but as budget games went at the time it was above average. *Soul of a Robot* is quite an improvement over its predecessor. It's somewhat similar to *Underwurlde* and games of that ilk, but if you enjoyed them then you may enjoy this one. Graphically the game is quite good but not superb. Games of this type prove very playable but not always addictive and the same goes for this. Then again, at £1.99, it provides excellent value for money. Mastertronic have brought out a game which is very enjoyable but not taxing, worth buying if you've got £2 spare.'

COMMENTS

Control keys: Q jump, O left, P right, W change leap strength, A pick up, E's to fly, SPACE to fire
Joystick: Kempston, Sinclair and Protek
Keyboard play: responsive, but can get awkward
Use of colour: cheerful, with a few attribute clashes
Graphics: some very nice touches on the backdrops
Sound: spot effects
Skill levels: one
Screens: hundreds and hundreds
General rating: a worthy follow-up to *Nonterraqueous*

Use of computer	72%
Graphics	71%
Playability	75%
Getting started	75%
Addictive qualities	71%
Value for money	84%
Overall	**75%**


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